

Washed Ashore

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Washed Ashore

by [starkerscoop](#)

Summary

Tony woke up on an island with zero recollection of how he got there. After venturing into the menacing forest occupying the land, he discovered that he wasn't as alone as he'd previously thought.

There was one other person on the island.

Chapter 1

The warm water lapped at his skin, drawing back and gently pushing forward until he opened his eyes. He drew in a deep breath, getting a whiff of the salty air, and immediately sat up.

His panicked eyes scanned the scenery around him, taking in the shore he was propped up in and the ocean water steadily creeping towards him. He stumbled up and out of reach, dodging the shells and small crabs littering the beach.

Ahead of him was a thick expanse of trees, the green leaves and moss overgrown and intertwining. There was no sign of civilization; there were no footprints, no buildings, and scarcely enough — no people.

Looking down at himself, Tony saw that he was left in only his boxers, which clung to him uncomfortably thanks to their wet state. Shrugging and choosing not to dwell on where the rest of his clothes were, if only to ward off his fear, he pulled at the waistband of his underwear until it was completely off. Then, he positioned it carefully at the top of his head, protecting it from the glaring sun.

Taking one last look at the large expanse of water behind him, he squared his shoulders and stepped into the forest. The trees were tall and foreboding, providing him with minimal light, but hiding him from the sun. Birds called to each other loudly, fluttering from one tree branch to another, feeding their children huge insects that had Tony shuddering in disgust.

He braved on. The deeper he went, the quieter the forest seemed to be, and it unnerved him. He crept through the shadows as silently as the uneven ground allowed; he wasn't sure how many predators lived on this island, or what species they were, but he wasn't going to try to attract them.

As he explored the terrain, his brain wandered. He had no idea how he'd gotten to this island, or why he'd had no clothes on. His last memory was of returning to the hotel he was staying at after attending a conference in Indonesia. He'd gone to sleep in the wonderfully soft bed at his suite, and woken up at the cleanest beach he'd ever seen.

Sighing, Tony slowed to a stop in front of a fork in the forest. At first glance, the paths looked identical. At the second, he noticed a faint, flickering light in the distance of the left path. Tony stiffened. This could mean salvation or danger; knowing his luck, it was likely to be the latter.

He took the left path. As he approached the glow, he noticed a hunched form sitting near it, blanketed by the shadows of the imposing trees and the slowly darkening sky. Fear struck his heart, but he forced himself to inch forward, until the form was revealed to be a young man.

The man -- boy? -- was staring at the fire with dark eyes, hair a very light brown, and skin bronzed from what Tony imagined was living his entire life in exposure to the sun. He was leanly muscled, which was likely a product of having to survive in the wilderness, too. The barest hint of stubble was sprinkled all over the lower half of his face.

Tony stepped forward, and a twig snapped. The boy jumped onto his feet and whirled around, hands raised defensively until he saw who had intruded on his space. When his eyes landed on Tony, his mouth dropped open in shock, and he stumbled away from him.

“Hey. You speak English?” Tony asked awkwardly, inwardly cringing at the question.

Dazed, the boy nodded slowly, but stayed silent. Tony looked around the site inquisitively.

“Anyone else here?” He waited for an answer impatiently, doing his best not to project his eagerness.

The boy cleared his throat, but when he spoke his voice came out raspy anyway, “Just me.”

“Sounds lonely. Mind if I sit?” Tony didn’t wait for an answer, moving around him instead and seating himself in front of the fire. “Let’s get to know each other, shall we? I’ve got to admit, I’m curious about how a caveman knows English.”

The boy didn’t take offense. He simply sat next to Tony, shifting so that their thighs brushed together. That was when Tony noticed his attire; he was wearing very worn jeans and a sweater riddled with holes. Evidently, he’d been here for a while. That was also when Tony remembered his own nakedness. He wasn’t shy, but he pulled the boxers off of his head and slid them on, sparing the boy from seeing his privates.

“My name is Peter Parker,” the boy said firmly, as if reassuring both himself and Tony, “I’ve been stranded on this island for one thousand and ninety-seven days.”

“That’s... oddly specific.” Tony noted, turning the information over in his head.

Peter shrugged, digging his chin into the arms his head was resting on. “There’s not much to do here, so I count the days. I eat, I drink, I bathe. That’s pretty much it.”

“Come on, kid. There’s gotta be something fun to do here. I’ll cry if there isn’t,” Tony warned, gratified when Peter let out a small giggle, “I swear I will.”

“I like to stargaze. I could never really see the stars in New York, but there are so many. And I’m friends with some of the animals.” Peter conceded.

“You’re from New York?” Tony watched him swallow harshly.

“Yeah. Don’t live there now, though. Obviously.” Peter’s jaw tightened.

Tony looked away. Sensitive topic, then. “You said you’re friends with some of the animals? Think you can keep us away from the bears?”

“I’ve got to talk to *someone*,” Peter said morosely, “And there are no bears here, Mr. Stark.”

Tony jolted. “You know who I am?”

“I’ve only been gone for three years. I know who Iron Man is.” He sent Tony a wry smile.

“Three years is a long time to be here, though. I’ve only been here one day and I’m ready to leave.” Tony brushed aside some twigs and laid down, staring up at the canopy of leaves above him.

“Do you think they’ll come for you?” Peter asked quietly, a tiny glint of unbidden hope rising in his eyes.

“I’m an important man, Pete,” he answered blandly, “I know they will.”

Peter let out a soft breath. “Will you take me with you?”

“Wouldn’t be much of a hero if I just left you here, would I?”

“I don’t know what I’ll do once I’m out.” Peter whispered, a faraway look on his face. “I’m so used to just being here. Alone. My family’s all dead at this point, so I guess... I guess I should start

planning. Or maybe I'll just stay."

Tony glared up at him. "I'm not letting you stay. I'll help you once we're out."

Peter turned to face him, a grateful flood of emotions rushing out of him in the form of a blinding smile that he gifted to Tony. Tony had to admit that, of all the things he had seen in his life, that smile was the most breathtaking.

"I'll help you." Tony promised.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Peter starts to teach Tony his new way of life.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They fell asleep well into the night, drawing comfort from the warmth radiating from the gentle glow of the dying fire. They alternated between staring at each other and at the darkness surrounding them, Peter especially being unable to look away. This was his first time seeing another human being in three years. Finally being allowed contact with another person unlocked a lot of thoughts he'd shoved down long ago; had any new Star Wars films been released recently? Had Ned gotten his degree? Who lived in the apartment Peter used to call home?

Was May buried next to Ben? She would've wanted that, Peter knew. She'd avoided bringing it up for months, but they both knew that her body wouldn't hold out for much longer. So, he'd sat her down at the kitchen table one night, and forced himself to ask. It was a painful conversation and one that was seared into his brain, right next to where Ben was, bleeding out into the street.

Cancer ended up taking her two days after their heart-to-heart. Peter never got to find out what happened to her after, because only a few hours later, he was abducted right next to the hospital. Grieving, numb and somehow pained all the same, he was too easy to sneak up on.

Troubled thoughts continued to run through his head until, finally, the tiredness won out just as the sky started brightening. Tony was in a similar boat, unable to get comfortable in such unfamiliar surroundings, and racking his brain for a plausible reason for him to be on an island. Alas, sleep pulled him under, too. Together they dozed until the sun was high up in the sky, sending its greetings even through the thick branches acting as barriers.

Peter woke first, startled to see that Tony was still slumped next to him. He'd thought meeting him was a dream, but he'd also stopped dreaming of rescue two years ago, so he supposed that wouldn't have made sense. He shuffled over to the closest tree and sat against it, observing Tony freely now that he wasn't able to comment on it. The man was sturdy and strong, olive skin gleaming under a light shimmer of sweat, and twitching in his sleep.

Peter wondered what kind of dreams Tony Stark had. He imagined they weren't very pleasant, but he wasn't going to ask. He'd been raised better than that.

“What, no wake up kiss for the Sleeping Beauty?” The man joked, sitting up now and gazing back at him.

Peter frowned quizzically.

Tony huffed. “Alright, not my best one, I'll admit. I blame heat stroke.”

“Please try not to get heat stroke,” Peter said quickly, “You'll die.”

Tony raised his eyebrows, unimpressed. “No, really? I never would've guessed, kid.”

“I’m just saying,” Peter defended, “There’s nothing to treat it with here, so your organs would shut down and then, boom, you’re dead.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “I promise not to get heat stroke. If I do die, you have permission to eat me, but only as a last resort. I’d like to be buried, thanks.”

Peter cringed. “I think you just jinxed it.”

“I’m sure I’m tasty, so. Whatever. What do you say we get out of here?” Tony proposed cheerfully.

“And go where?” Peter deadpanned.

Tony shrugged, gesturing in a random direction. “You tell me. You’re the one who got first dibs on being stranded.”

Peter contemplated his words for a moment, then looked up, grinning broadly. “How do you feel about going on a hike?”

They trekked through the forest side by side. It all looked the same to Tony, but Peter seemed to know where he was going, so he kept an eye out for any identifying markers. Now that Tony had someone to walk with, the forest didn’t seem so intimidating. Peter brightened up every clearing they stepped through, establishing some heavy competition for the sun. He chattered loudly and enthusiastically, not faltering under Tony’s sarcasm or dry wit. It was the opposite, actually — he shot back with his own level of sass, and Tony found it refreshing. He’d grown so used to being spoken to like a deity or villain. There was no in-between, really.

To be treated like any other human being was something he never realized he needed until Peter did it.

“Are we there yet?” Tony panted, swiping at the beads of sweat collecting on his forehead.

Peter cooed. “Aw, is the poor baby tired already?”

Tony flipped him off swiftly. “Not all of us have the pleasure of doing this every day. The most exercise I’ve gotten in months was when I ran to the lab because Dum-E set it on fire.”

“Dum-E?” Peter tilted his head curiously. Tony had to fight back a smile at how puppy-like the action was.

“He’s a robot I made when I was even younger than you are now.”

Peter glared at him balefully. “I’m sorry, *even younger*?”

“Yeah. You’re what, thirteen?” Tony teased, sidestepping the shove Peter sent his way.

“Twenty-one.” Peter corrected.

Tony patted him on the shoulder. “Same thing, once you get to my age.”

“You say that like you’re eighty, or something.” Peter eyed him weirdly.

Tony grumbled, “I liked you better when you were quiet.”

“You’re the first person I’ve gotten to talk to in a while,” Peter fiddled with his hands timidly, “I can shut up, if you want.”

Tony's eyes softened, and he slung an arm around the man, pulling him closer in an uncharacteristic show of affection. "I'm just teasing, kid. You can talk my ear off for all I care."

Peter lit up, passing him a thankful smile and leaning into the touch. The heat was sweltering, the air muggy, and any other time, pressing against a warm body would be the last thing he'd want to do — but damn it, he hadn't had a hug in years, and if this was the closest he'd ever get to one now, he'd take what he could get.

"Oh, we're here!" Peter exclaimed, leaving Tony's side reluctantly to push aside the branches in front of them.

He held them back and waited for Tony to walk through, then released them gently, letting them fall back into place. Tony stopped next to Peter and looked around in a daze, mouth ajar. Ahead of them was a magnificent, glittering blue waterfall rushing over a cliff and falling into the pool a mere few feet away. The water called to them tauntingly, clean and cold, drying their throats further.

"The water isn't completely clean, but it's not like I have anything to purify it with, so I've just been taking my chances. And there are fish to catch here, so I don't have to go to the ocean for that, either. This is also where I wash my clothes and, well, myself." Peter explained, watching him expectantly for his reaction.

Tony crossed his arms in disbelief. "You've never gotten sick drinking this?"

"I have," Peter admitted, "But it's just a stomach ache, and I haven't had any in a long time, so I think I kinda got immune. It's better than dying of thirst, anyway."

"Yeah." Tony sighed deeply, "Well, I'm gonna take a dip."

He sauntered towards the lake and stepped into the water, hissing at the sharp contrast of the cold water to the scorching heat. Deciding to get it over with, he dunked his entire body into the water, floating near the bottom of the lake until he was completely acclimated to the temperature. He shot up when his lungs started to burn, beckoning Peter towards him excitedly. The younger man smiled slightly at his eagerness, stripping off his clothes to join him in the water.

"How do you usually catch fish?" Tony inquired, kicking his feet in circles to keep himself afloat.

Peter glanced at the water searchingly. "Sometimes I challenge myself by trying to get them with my hands, but most of the time I use a spear."

"Where the hell did you get a spear?" Tony gaped.

"I made one," Peter said sardonically, "It was easy. I just had to find a thin branch, a good rock, and sharpen the branch until it could work as a spear."

"Where is it?" Tony asked, choosing to ignore the patronizing tone.

Peter waded out of the water to a nearby log, grabbing his spear from behind the fallen tree, and got back in the water before the chill could set in. He handed it to Tony and watched the man inspect his home-made weapon, the older man turning it this way and that.

"You know what? This is actually pretty good." Tony gave him back the spear, impressed.

"We should get to hunting, then."

Chapter End Notes

Well. Looks like I am continuing this after all :)

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Tony gets a little too careless.

Chapter Notes

I wasn't sure if this was something that needed to be mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, because I am putting it in the tags, but this chapter includes a handjob and cum eating.

"The fish isn't half-bad," Tony spoke through his mouthful, snickering inwardly at the disgusted way Peter was looking at him.

"I'm the one who's spent three years away from civilization, and yet you're the one eating like an animal." Peter cringed, returning his attention to the fish clutched in his own hands.

Tony scowled, but finished chewing before he said, "Must be getting old eating fish all the time. When we get back, what's the first thing you'll eat?"

"I don't even like seafood." Peter confessed, "I genuinely had to think about whether surviving was worth it if this was what I had to eat."

Tony winced. "That's a little morbid."

"Yeah, maybe," Peter laughed bashfully, "But there's this bodega in Queens that I used to go to all the time. I'd always get the Number 5 with pickles, smushed down flat. I was pretty close with Delmar -- that's the owner."

"Smushed down flat?" Tony repeated.

"It makes it more crunchy." Peter said defensively.

Tony held up his hands innocently. He plunged his hands into the lake, washing off any remaining traces of the fish and ridding himself of the smell. He waited for Peter to do the same, slightly confused when the younger man added more wood to their fire.

"Aren't we heading back to the campsite?" Tony asked hesitantly, oddly concerned about being wrong. Maybe it was because he was so far out of his element. Or maybe it was because this was Peter in front of him, and for some godforsaken reason, Tony wanted to impress him.

Huh. Tony's never had to work to impress someone, but he liked it. Maybe. Only if it worked.

Peter shook his head, a small smile flickering on his lips, almost as if he knew what Tony was thinking. Tony sincerely hoped he didn't; he didn't think he could ever live it down if he did.

“It’s getting dark. I don’t want to risk getting lost.” Peter explained, settling comfortably next to the fire, mindful of the sparks springing from the flames. “Is there anything specific you want to do tomorrow?”

Tony hummed contemplatively. “You’re going to have to lay out my options, Pete.”

“I mean, we can do anything you want,” Peter offered, “But I was thinking about walking around the shore, see if we can find anything of yours washed up.”

“Sounds good to me. I didn’t even think to look around before I went into the forest.” Tony agreed, carefully sliding off of the log he was perched on and sprawling out on the ground spread-eagle.

Peter inched closer so that their sides were pressed together, wordlessly pointing at the sky as stars winked in and out of existence. Tony couldn’t help but gasp; the wide expanse of the inky sky, speckled with bright stars and faint clouds, was certainly a sight to behold. Peter smiled satisfactorily, turning his head to watch him admire the view.

“It’s stuff like this that makes this whole thing worth it sometimes.” Peter breached the silence quietly. “Other times... I just want to go home.”

His voice was desperate and pleading, the slightest bit of fear drowning his eyes, his *soul*, and yet it rang out steadily, silent again when he didn’t receive a verbal response.

Tony swallowed roughly, and after steeling his nerves, reached out with a shaking hand and draped it gently over Peters. If he thought his hands were rough, Peter’s were on a whole new level, hardened up from long days and lonely nights on the island. They were scarred and calloused, the little bumps on his palms colliding with Tony’s own. Tony didn’t dare to look at Peter’s reaction, staring up ahead and rubbing soothing circles onto his knuckles.

They fell asleep that way, pushed right up against each other, hands intertwined and resting in between their slowly rising chests.

With no trees to save them from the sun in this clearing, they were roused from their rest early on, allowing them a head start on hiking back to the campsite. Tony wasn’t sure if it counted as a head start, considering they had nowhere to be at a specific time, but he was too busy sweating and groaning to care. He’d been worried, at first, that after last night Peter would be more subdued.

Tony must have done something right, though, because Peter was just as happy and energetic as before, if not more.

By the time they got back to their site, they were both too tired to go through with their search of the beach, and collapsed next to a hastily built fire, exhaustion taking over completely and forcing their eyes closed.

Tony thanked every known and unknown god the next morning for letting him wake up first, because he did so on top of Peter, erection pressing impatiently against his rear. As soon as he gathered his bearings, he rolled off of Peter, heart pounding as he waited to see if Peter was awake. When his eyes remained closed, Tony sighed in overwhelming relief, heart rate gradually slowing down as he wondered what the right course of action would be.

He should probably get up and leave, hide behind some trees and get rid of his problem, but -- well, it was aching something fierce, and demanded to be taken care of immediately and on the spot. This was a terrible idea, Tony knew, sneaking another wary glance at the snoozing man beside him.

Sucking in a deep breath, Tony slid a hand into his boxers, hissing through clenched teeth when it made contact with his dick. He tried to slide it up, hips already jerking up slightly from the feeling, but it was ruined by the overall dryness. Sighing out of frustration, he risked another glance at Peter. Relieved to see that he was still dead to the world, Tony turned back and spat in his own palm, then shoving it back in his boxers to grab at his cock. He fisted himself roughly, not sparing any time for extra pleasure, fucking into his hand. His thumb rubbed over the tip, made slippery with precome, and moved back down to encase his dick. Wanting desperately both for release and to avoid being caught -- though he had to admit, the prospect did make it hotter, morals be damned -- he moved his hips desperately, tightening his hand until he was twitching, coming all over his hand and stomach.

Tony relaxed into the ground shakily, cooling down and tucking himself back into his boxers. He stared at his dirtied body, wondering how he was supposed to get rid of the evidence of his not-so-pure endeavors.

“So, um... the beach?” Peter piped up.

Tony whipped around immediately, eyes widening as he clutched his hand to his chest, as if that would somehow hide what he’d done. “How long have you been up?”

“A little bit before you came. Sorry.” Peter rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly, “I wasn’t sure what to do.”

“It’s fine.” Tony said reflexively, “Wouldn’t be the first time someone’s seen my dick without meaning to.”

Peter watched him for a moment, then bit his lip and said, “Do you want some help?”

“What?” Tony asked faintly, disbelief evident in every inch of his face.

Peter hesitated, analyzing him as if to anticipate his actions before he himself could even think them through, and reached for his hand. Shocked, but not really against whatever it was Peter was planning, he allowed his hand to be raised to Peter’s mouth. A tongue peeked out and started gliding across his skin, collecting the white rivulets painted across his hand, gliding in between the crevices of his fingers and leaving nothing behind.

Tony’s cock twitched valiantly, but stayed limp, too spent to be of use. Peter pushed him lightly onto his back, crawling in between his legs to hover his head just over where Tony’s come got on his stomach. He bent his head down, sucking the skin of Tony’s taut abdomen into his mouth, leaving behind small bruises while simultaneously gathering all of Tony’s spend.

Eventually, when everything was gone and Tony’s skin was marked in various places, Peter rested his head on top of Tony’s stomach, digging his chin into the bruises and giving him a pleasant mixture of pleasure and pain.

“Do you need me to take care of you?” Tony offered breathily, because he was nothing if not a fair partner.

“I’m okay this time.” Peter mumbled, smiling up at him in thanks.

This time. Tony tried not to think of the implications of that.

“So, that happened.” Tony tried for a laugh.

Peter scrutinized him closely, “And what do you think?”

Tony barely managed to stop his automatic deflection from tumbling out. He wasn't sure why, but he had a feeling that wouldn't be allowed with Peter. "I think it was nice... and that I wouldn't mind if it happened again."

"What are we, then?" Peter asked tentatively, hope and surprise joining forces in the form of the most irresistible puppy eyes Tony had ever seen.

He tried not to cringe at the question. "It's too soon to tell, kid. I don't know if I want a relationship -- hell, we've only known each other for, what, three days?"

Peter didn't seem put off, understanding completely where he was coming from, and it only made Tony want him more. Even if they didn't jump right into a relationship, well, friends with benefits existed.

"I do want to explore things with you further," Tony said slowly, trying to think ahead, "So, at least for now, how about we just fool around? Well, not fool around, but -- God, I can't talk at all. Friends with benefits. For now. Maybe a relationship in the future if we seem like a good fit. How's that sound?"

Peter laughed at the way he stumbled over his words, trying his best to hold it back when it made Tony frown. Well, at least Peter knew he was being genuine. "Sounds perfect."

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Tony finds something of his at the beach.

“Is the sand too hot for us to be walking around barefoot?” Tony faltered near the treeline.

Peter brushed past him, stepping confidently onto the sand. “You tell me, genius. Aren’t you the one who woke up in it?”

“Right,” Tony flushed, striding out of the shadows to join him, “That’s right.”

“You’re actually nervous right now. Why are you nervous?” Peter asked him curiously.

“I’m not nervous.” Tony glared.

Peter shrugged easily, turning back to the ocean they were nearing. “Whatever you say.”

“How’d you know I woke up in it?” Tony’s eyebrows drew together.

“I guessed. You’re the only one here, there’s no boat, and you didn’t look very wet when you ran into me, so I assumed you didn’t swim here.”

Tony pointed out, “I could’ve dried by the time I met you.”

“So I’m wrong?” Peter frowned doubtfully.

“No, you’re right. Again.” Tony admitted.

Peter grinned. “That’s two to zero. You’ve gotta catch up, Mr. Stark.”

“Call me Tony.” Tony said insistently. “Mr. Stark is for my employees and the Board.”

Peter sucked in a harsh breath, eyes downcast. “I forgot you owned Stark Industries.”

Tony sounded confused, “It’s in the name.”

“Well, yeah, but you’re -- different. I don’t know, it sounds dumb. Before I got here, I’d see you on TV or in magazines, and you’re not the same person that you are in real life. It’s easy to forget that you’re Tony Stark : genius, billionaire, playboy, philanthropist. To me, you’re just Tony, without all that extra flair.” Peter said slowly, second-guessing each word as it spilled out, “I guess what I’m trying to say is that it’s easy to forget you’re so important and well-known.”

Tony was silent for a few minutes. The longer the silence stretched out, the more anxious Peter grew, and so he said:

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said anything--”

Tony cut in then, shaking himself out of his stupor. “No, no, you’re fine. It’s fine. I just wasn’t expecting that.”

Peter nodded, avoiding his eyes and deciding that now was as good a time as any to start searching the beach. "I'll start looking over there." He gestured thoughtlessly to the right and started walking away.

"Peter," Tony called out, waiting for him to turn back around before continuing, "I appreciate that. You didn't offend me, if that's what you're worried about. I'd rather you like who I really am and not the persona the rest of the world likes. So... thanks."

Peter nodded in response, a shy smile forming on his face.

"But also, let's limit emotional talks to twice a year. I don't do good with those." Tony added quickly.

This time Peter laughed, loud and happy as he shook his head and made his way to the side of the beach he wanted to look over. Tony watched him leave, smiling despite himself, and went to the opposite side.

There were some large rocks planted in the shallow bit of the ocean, so he stepped into the water and went to them, eyeing the small crabs crawling all over the crumbling stone.

A small glint of metal caught his eye, and further inspection showed a small object nestled between two of the rocks, stiff and unmoving. Tony carefully dipped his hand into the water, grappling around until it caught the object, and pulled it out.

A wristwatch stared back at him. The face was rectangular, the band a mix of red, gold, and silver.

"Shit." Tony staggered back in shock.

He knew that watch. He knew it intimately, knew every ridge and joint, knew what made it tick -- literally. This was the watch he'd personally labored over; it looked like a regular watch, but when the right button was pressed, it turned into an Iron Man gauntlet.

He explained all of that to Peter. "And, when it turns into the gauntlet, the tracker in the watch is triggered. My location gets sent to FRIDAY, my AI. If I don't turn it off in the following fifteen minutes, she contacts the Avengers."

Peter's eyes glistened with hope and elation. "So what are we waiting for? Turn it on!" He urged.

Tony's shoulders sank in relief. He couldn't even begin to imagine what Peter felt like -- three years of speaking only to himself and the animals that couldn't respond. Three years of sleeping on his own. Eating on his own. Having no one to say 'good morning' to, and knowing that maybe it didn't even matter, because who would he greet each day, anyway? Everyone he loved was dead. Three years of eating the food he hated most. Three years of genuinely wondering if it was worth it to keep trying.

Three years, and they were about to come to an end.

Tony slid on the watch, and with his other hand he went to trigger the button that would change its form into that of a gauntlet. He held his breath and delicately pressed down on the button.

The button jammed half-way through.

Tony couldn't bring himself to look at Peter when he heard his breath hitch. Even without seeing or hearing him, he knew what Peter would look like. Devastated, maybe even accepting. Maybe he'd known it wouldn't work all along and couldn't force himself to fully hope.

Tony couldn't face this failure head-on. He tensed up when he felt a soft hand fall onto his shoulder. He fully expected to be hit; he wouldn't have stopped Peter from doing it.

"I'm sorry, Tony." Peter said in a hushed voice, "I guess you'll have to stick around a bit longer."

Without meaning to, Tony looked up. Peter didn't seem angry, or even upset. All Tony could see was acceptance and empathetic pity.

Tony hated it. "Why aren't you angry?"

"It's not your fault that the gauntlet didn't activate." Peter cut right to the chase.

Tony sneered at the words. "Who do you think built this watch?"

"Tony." Peter pinched the bridge of his nose, exasperated. "It's been in the ocean for days, trapped between rocks. It could've been damaged -- or maybe you were using it in a fight and it broke. It's not like you went and personally broke it."

Tony didn't back down. "I should've built it so it'd be indestructible."

"Don't you think every mechanic or engineer thinks the exact same thing? It's fine, Tony. I'm sure you'll make it even better when you come home." Peter assured him.

"And how do you suppose we'll get home, now that this thing's about as dead as a doorknob?" Tony asked bitterly.

Peter grabbed the watch from Tony and stuffed it into his own pockets, then reached for his hand to tug him towards a pile of jagged rocks. "I've got an idea. It's super cliche, and it's been used in tons of movies. I even tried it out a couple years ago, but no one came so I put everything back. You said it yourself, though -- you're an important man and people will be looking for any sign that you're alive. Now that you're missing, I have a feeling we'll have a lot of helicopters flying over us, and the likelihood that this'll be noticed is really high."

"Peter," Tony interrupted, "What exactly is "this"?"

"You'll see," Peter said vaguely. "But we should start now."

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Peter gets injured.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter's plan turned out to be very underwhelming, but it did take a lot of energy out of them. They spent the majority of the day shifting all the rocks they could find into position, backs sore from being bent all day to roll any rocks too large to carry.

At one point, Peter's arms gave out and dropped a stone three times the size of his head onto his foot, crushing the bones in one fell swoop. He cried out loudly, face crumpling in agonized pain, and fell to the ground.

A chill went down Tony's spine when he heard the whimpers escaping Peter's mouth. He took off in Peter's direction, air leaving his mouth in quick pants as he ran, and crouched next to Peter when he finally reached him.

"Peter!" Tony gasped, running a soothing hand along his back, "I have to lift it, okay? I know it hurts."

Tony swallowed down his panic, allowing his brain to slow down, and let the Iron Man training kick in. He had to be calm, especially since Peter clearly wasn't.

Peter nodded in acquiescence, silent tears slipping down his cheeks. Tony thumbed at the tear tracks, smoothing them away and comforting Peter in one go. Taking a single calming breath, Tony slipped his hands under the rock and scooped it up, hurrying away from Peter in two steps to drop it. He scurried back and tried to analyze Peter's foot with a clinical eye.

His foot was shaking slightly along with the rest of Peter's body, though that was mostly because of the force of his choked off sobs. His foot was red and already swelling, contrasting with the darkening bruises staining it.

"We're gonna have to wrap it with leaves. Or maybe your shirt, and I'll go look for some twine, or something." Tony's eyes roved over their surroundings desperately.

"Tony," Peter tried, clearing his throat and blinking away his tears.

"We don't have medicine. I'm sorry, Pete." Tony clutched his hand tightly, almost as if he was the one that needed comfort at the moment.

Peter shook his head, "Tony, it's okay."

"You're in pain," Tony muttered, looking away at the reminder, "That's never okay."

"No, you don't get it." Peter sighed, lips twitching upwards at the words, "Alright, I guess this is when I tell you."

Tony sat down with his legs crossed, grabbing Peter's other hand so that he could have both, if needed. Peter laughed softly, then started to explain:

"My parents were geneticists, and not really my parents. They were just my creators, I guess, because it turns out that I was their test subject for the next Captain America. Except they didn't give me a serum. I don't really know much; most of their notes were ruined, but I know they failed. The injection they gave me when I was born was set to trigger after I went through hormonal changes -- so, puberty. And I did. It hurt like hell, but I didn't become enhanced, and definitely did not become the next Captain Patriotism. All it did was boost my healing."

Tony took a moment to just stare at the young man fiddling with the sand underneath them; he would pick some up and then let it trickle out through his fist.

"That's just. Wow." Tony blinked, scratching at his chin, "And I thought my parents were bad."

Peter offered him a sympathetic smile.

Tony flashed him a false one in response. "But the important thing is that you'll heal, right? How long do you think it'll take your foot to be okay?"

"Uh, I've never really broken my foot like this, so. I don't know." Peter shrugged, hurrying to continue when all Tony did was shoot him an annoyed look, "I think I'll be good in a few days. I just hope it doesn't heal wrong."

Tony squeezed his hands then, an awkward attempt at comfort. "I'm sorry your parents turned out to be assholes."

"It's okay. They died when I was little, so I don't really remember if they were assholes." Peter gave him a squeeze of his own, then used his grip to pull him closer, so that they were snuggled against each other.

"Is that okay?" Peter whispered, a small blush painting his skin in delightful ways. Tony wanted to trace it down his body, see how far it went.

"More than okay." Tony answered genuinely. He couldn't remember the last time he'd felt this comfortable with someone, especially when that someone was essentially a stranger.

He had a feeling that no matter what their futures had in store for them, Tony would want to keep him around. It was a nice thought.

"Can I kiss you?" Peter asked abruptly, cheeks flushing.

It was hard to reconcile this reserved version of Peter with the one that had eaten come off of Tony's stomach earlier that day.

In answer to Peter's question, Tony leaned down until his dry lips brushed against Peter's, who stilled for a second before eagerly reciprocating. They stayed like that for a few minutes, slowly moving their mouths in tandem, the atmosphere relaxed and easy.

Peter pulled away eventually, eyes wide and mouth open. Tony gently pushed his jaw until his teeth clicked together and his lips sealed shut, laughing at the mind-blown expression on Peter's face.

Peter pouted good-naturedly. "You know, I asked if I could kiss you. Not if you could kiss me."

“Oh?” Tony leaned back, balancing his weight on his palms, “Well, you get what you get and you don’t throw a fit.”

Peter winced theatrically. “Oh, god, you sound like my second grade teacher, Ms. Green.”

“Wouldn’t want that,” Tony agreed, then paused and jokingly said, “Unless... was she hot?”

Peter snorted. “I don’t know, Tony, that’s not what my focus was on in second grade.”

Tony laughed along, until a certain thought passed through his mind. “I don’t want to leave you, but it’s getting dark and we still need to eat.”

“It’s okay,” Peter assured him, “We’re close to the ocean, so you can go try your luck with pulling fish out of the water. You wouldn’t make it to the waterfall before the sun sets, and I don’t think you know your way around well enough to get there and back, anyway.”

“People say I’m a genius,” Tony mentioned, “And I am. But you make me feel like the dumbest person alive.”

Peter cackled, pushing his shoulder to get him to stand up, and said, “Well, I’m crippled, so you’ll have to do all the work. Good luck with the rocks.”

Tony’s face fell at the reminder, and he turned to look at the rocks laid out on the beach resignedly. “I’ll finish with that tomorrow.”

“Whatever you want. It’s not like they’ll be going anywhere.” Peter teased, nudging him again to get him moving.

“Alright, alright, I’m going. I’ll get you a tiny fish for that.” Tony warned, ruffling his hair and running off before Peter could yell at him for it.

He didn’t get a tiny fish for Peter. It was embarrassing to say, but it took Tony over an hour before he could catch a single fish, because they kept darting away or slipping out of his hands. Tony refused to feel humiliated by the laughter that burst out of Peter every time he slipped on seaweed, flipping him off easily and reminding him who was currently providing for who.

He ended up with two fish, one small and one medium. Tony handed the medium sized fish to Peter, reminding him that he needed to eat more to heal.

The next day was spent with Peter lounging in the shade, resting his foot while it slowly stitched the bones back together, and watching Tony haul the rocks with painstaking care. The older man didn’t want to break any of his own bones, especially because he couldn’t heal the way Peter could.

By the time he was done, the stars were starting to come out. That was okay, though, because the goal was accomplished,

The rocks were positioned all over the beach, and formed three huge letters.

SOS.

Feedback is appreciated! :)

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

I think I'll stop writing summaries, I never really wanted to do them and I feel like they spoil the story (even though I tried to make them as vague as possible). Sorry if you wanted those!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter's foot was still injured the next day, but it was well enough that he could hobble along next to Tony as they found their way back to the waterfall. They decided to set up camp nearby instead of constantly going back and forth from the site to the waterfall, so they stopped by the old one to grab what few things they had, and left. Tony made sure to check that his watch was still in Peter's pocket every thirty minutes; despite the sense of failure seeing it brought him, he didn't want to part with a creation he'd spent so much time on.

Tony ended up having to do all the work in terms of fishing -- this time with the spear, now that he had it -- but he didn't mind, especially because there was a valid reason for it. It was in his nature to provide, anyway; he was just usually doing so with money.

He thought he might prefer it this way. Giving money to people felt more superficial, but it was the only way he'd known to show his care. He knew better now.

"Tony," Peter sat up, "Do you hear that?"

Tony cocked his head, straining his ears to listen as well as humanly possible. At first, all he heard was the chirping of birds fluttering by, but then his ears picked up something else. It was a choppy sound, steadily growing louder as it approached the island. Tony got up and jogged over to the waterfall, where he could see upwards without the trees getting in the way.

A black helicopter flew over them, rustling the nearby leaves as it went past.

Tony turned to watch Peter slowly limp towards him, a permanent wince on his face. Tony grabbed his hand tightly, getting his attention. "Pete, that was a helicopter."

Peter's eyes widened, and uncertainty mingled with hope in his eyes. "Tony, I don't know if I can leave."

"What? Why not?" Tony asked, brows furrowing as his heart sped up, worried that the copter might leave while they were talking.

"I'm scared," Peter admitted in a hushed voice, ashamed. "I don't know what the world is like anymore."

"Peter," Tony said patiently, waiting for him to look him in the eyes, "You'll be with me the entire time. I won't leave your side until you get so sick of me that you make me go."

Peter bit his lip, and Tony had to fight the urge to unhook it and smooth it over. "Promise?"

Tony felt his heart crumble in his chest. Peter sounded so child-like and innocent, then, and Tony knew it must have been harder than Peter was letting on to be stuck on the island for so long, completely isolated from the world and slowly going mad.

“Promise.” Tony swore fiercely.

Peter nodded shakily. That was all the confirmation Tony needed before pulling him up and into his arms. He would have usually let Peter do the walking on his own, but they needed to get to the shore fast, before the helicopter’s occupants could decide that the island was vacant, and that the SOS sprawled all over the beach was old.

Peter’s injury would hold them back. Tony tightened his grip and started sprinting through the woods, jumping over any roots that could trip him up and batting away low branches before they could strike him or Peter in the face. He was breathing heavily by the time he started reaching the shore, his speed faltering and muscles burning from Peter’s weight in his arms.

Unadulterated relief spread throughout his body when he spotted the helicopter perched next to the rocks. There was a group of men clambering out, scanning the beach with oddly authoritative eyes.

Tony set Peter down, but held him close, an uneasy feeling churning his stomach. Peter glanced at him nervously, seeking support that Tony gave even as nerves started to strike his own heart.

There was something weird about the situation. Tony couldn’t place a finger on what it was, but he crept forward, pulling Peter along.

“Over here!” Tony called, gaining the group’s attention. The men glanced at each other and started to stride towards them, gaits confident and assured.

“Stark,” A man greeted him gruffly, “I see you’re alive.”

“Yeah,” Tony huffed in faux amusement, “Isn’t it great?”

The man stayed silent, and Tony tried not to overthink why. Peter’s hand gripped his harder, and Tony looked down to see that he was squinting at the group with vague recognition. Before Tony could say anything about it, a needle pierced the skin of his neck.

Tony staggered back, unintentionally making Peter stumble.

“Peter Parker,” The same man said slowly, a small grin curving up his lips, “Back from the dead?”

Tony’s vision was starting to blur, and he yanked out the needle in his neck, glaring down at it until he could make out that it was a dart. His pulse stuttered at the sight, and he tossed it aside, then shoving Peter behind him protectively.

“Who the hell are you?” Tony snarled, backing away from the group and clutching Peter tighter. He hoped his grip wasn’t bruising him.

The man sneered. “We are HYDRA.”

The men closed in on them, grabbing them and pulling them apart. Tony clawed clumsily at their arms, trying to fight his way back to Peter, but the world was spinning and it was getting harder to see with each passing minute. A sharp crack had Tony regaining his focus even as the edges of his vision started to darken. Peter was on the ground, face buried in the sand and arms restrained behind his back, hands tied together with rope that cut into his skin with angry red lines.

Tony's anger doubled, and he tried once more to get to Peter, but the black was continuing to creep into his vision, and all he could do was watch helplessly as Peter was thrown into the helicopter. With all the commotion and the men's gleeful muttering filling his ears, Tony knew he couldn't hold on for much longer.

The world went dark.

Chapter End Notes

So... what do you think? I know this is a bit shorter than my (admittedly already short) usual chapters, but I wanted to end the chapter there.

Chapter 7

Unnatural silence was what woke Tony up. In the week he'd spent living on the island, he'd grown used to being surrounded by various sounds. The calling of birds, the rustling of the wind, the chirping insects, the push and pull of waves, Peter's quiet breathing...

Tony sat up in a panic. All around him were blank reinforced walls, silver and all-encompassing, pressing in on him in a way he didn't like. The floor was hard and cold, easily felt through his boxers -- which, goddamnit, were still the only clothes he had.

He calmed down slightly when he noticed Peter slumped in the corner, chin digging into his chest and face serene as he slept. Tony crawled over to him to pull him into his side, letting him rest in a more comfortable position as he tried to figure out what was going on.

HYDRA. Right. Tony checked Peter's wrists and was relieved to see that the lines from the rope were already fading. He'd been untied and left propped against the wall, it seemed. Tony huddled closer. He wouldn't say it aloud, but the chill was getting to him, especially after having acclimated to blazing hot weather.

Peter stirred. "Why's it so cold?"

Tony hugged him tighter, relieved when Peter's shivering went down a notch. "Open your eyes and you'll see."

Peter did as told, eyes widening in terror before he turned and buried his face in Tony's chest. "Is kidnapping normal now? I didn't think three years would make this much of a difference."

Tony groaned, slipping a hand into Peter's hair to card through it slowly. "Don't even joke. Of course, we think we're going home and get kidnapped by HYDRA instead."

"I got away the first time, we'll be fine this time, too." Peter assured him, wrapping himself completely around Tony to warm him up, too.

Tony stilled. "They knew your name. That makes sense now."

Peter nodded slightly, pushing his head into Tony's hand and urging him to keep petting his hair.

"They got me right outside of the hospital May died in. I was upset, so I didn't really notice, or even fight back. I let them take me and came to my senses when we were flying in a helicopter. I broke the glass and jumped out into the ocean; I thought I had a better chance of surviving then most. I was right, but I guess they thought I was dead and didn't bother checking."

"There's no way you came out of that without getting hurt." Tony fretted, checking him over as if he'd still have the injuries he acquired years ago.

"I didn't," Peter said with a wince, "The first week I spent on the island was kind of a blur. I just remember a lot of pain and barely managing to drag myself onto the island."

"Why did HYDRA want you?" Tony mused, shifting subconsciously to move Peter away from the door.

Peter sighed, the air hitting Tony's neck smoothly. "Well, remember that healing factor I told you about?"

Tony nodded mutely.

“They wanted to see how my parents did it,” Peter mumbled, “I’m not sure if they wanted to use my DNA to enhance others, or to see if they can enhance me further, but I know it’s nothing good. I think… I think my parents were HYDRA. I think they were meant to keep working on me and report back to them, and that when they died, HYDRA never stopped watching me. They were just waiting until there was no one who’d look for me if I went missing.”

Tony thought about that for a minute, pressing distracted kisses to Peter’s cheeks to comfort him while he did. He wondered distantly when being with Peter started to feel so easy.

“When we get home, I’m wrapping you in bubble wrap and never letting you leave my penthouse,” Tony said decisively.

Peter startled, a small laugh bubbling past his lips and melting away his glum mood.

The door opened, slamming into the wall with a harsh bang that had them jumping apart. A pair of men marched into the room, clad in plain dark clothing with guns at their waists, combat boots coming to a stop right in front of their faces. Most noticeable were the tentacles engraved on their shirts.

“Up,” A man with a full head of silver hair barked.

Tony dubbed him as Jack Frost as he climbed to his feet. He thought maybe the man could read minds, because he was immediately pushed back onto the floor.

“Not you,” Jack said grumpily.

“Ah, no can do, sorry,” Tony shrugged, placing himself at Peter’s side, “Wherever he goes, I go.”

Jack scowled at him darkly. “We have a different use for you.”

The other man -- this one dubbed Scarface for the scars on the bridge of his nose -- grabbed Tony’s arm and started dragging him out of the room. Behind him, Tony could hear Peter protesting the movement and demanding to know where Tony was being taken. Tony turned his head and was dismayed to see Peter being lugged down the other side of the hallway.

They turned to the right, and Peter was out of his sight. Tony stayed silent and took note of his surroundings, mapping out the building as they went in hopes of using that knowledge in the very near future to escape.

They came to a stop in front of a plain door. Scarface scanned his palm on the scanner next to it, then typed in a code that Tony had no problem ogling. When the red light on the scanner turned green, Scarface opened the door and pushed Tony in.

The room turned out to be a hybrid of a laboratory and a workshop. There were some tables set up with beakers, chemicals, and computers. A few different toolboxes were scattered throughout the room; it was unoccupied and dark, a few flickering bulbs lighting the way with no windows to let in any sun.

Tony sighed. His kidnappers always wanted him to build something.

“What is it this time? A time travel device?” Tony turned to Scarface, exasperated. “You ungrateful fucks always want something.”

The punch came out of nowhere, and it left his face red and tingling, lips feeling slightly numb when he tried to speak again.

“You will make an AI,” Scarface ordered, “It is my understanding that you are adequate at it.”

“*Adequate?*” Tony sniffed, offended.

Scarface looked unperturbed. “The AI must be functional and answer to HYDRA officials only. You start now.”

The man turned on his heel and left, the door locking shut automatically behind him. Tony fell onto a stool with a tired sigh, rubbing his face as he thought over the situation he was in. The lab was unnervingly quiet now that the man was gone, and Tony almost found himself wishing that Scarface had stayed with him.

Unbiddenly, his mind wandered towards Peter. Tony shuddered to think of what they could be doing to him at this very moment. He had no doubt that he was in a better position than Peter.

He slid off the stool, determination coursing through his veins as he started to look through the cabinets in the room.

Tony would get them home.

Chapter 8

Tony did end up starting on the A.I. He'd found a folder in one of the drawers and managed to figure out why HYDRA needed an A.I. in the first place. The information was very vague, but he got the gist of it. They wanted control over the internet, and having an A.I. to do it for them would be convenient.

An A.I. in HYDRA's hands would be dangerous. They'd be able to hack into anything, find out whatever they wanted, scour every corner of the internet. Privacy would be a mere concept by the time they were done. They'd be able to do everything Tony chose not to do with his power.

Though Tony was conceding and building an A.I., it would be mediocre at best. It certainly wouldn't match up to FRIDAY -- and especially not to E.D.I.T.H.

By the time Tony was taken back to the cell, he hadn't made much progress. He'd spent the majority of his day sifting through all his resources and setting aside the things he'd need. Scarface seemed disgruntled when he came to get him, not satisfied with the minimal amount of work done, but Tony argued that it wasn't possible to work without the supplies ready and in his reach.

Scarface didn't look like he appreciated the comment much, but he stayed silent. Probably because he knew Tony was right.

Tony was waiting for Peter to be brought back to the cell now. He'd been in there alone for forty minutes, and still there was no sign of Peter. He paced the length of the room with hurried footsteps that took him nowhere, frustration and fear mixing together in his gut.

The door opened, and Peter fell into the room. He looked frail and sick, his face pasty and clammy with sweat. Tony turned him over onto his back, bile rushing up his throat when he saw the bruises and gashes all along his stomach. Tony pushed the sweater all the way off, heart cracking more with each injury his eyes caught.

There was a gunshot wound embedded in his shoulder. Below that, a trail of small, bloody circles, like someone had continuously pushed in with a screwdriver.

Tony pushed down his nausea.

"I'm okay, don't worry," Peter croaked, red eyes turning to blink at him.

Tony clenched his jaw helplessly. "How do I make you feel better?"

"Just talk to me," Peter's smile trembled, "This is all part of the process. They want to see how long it takes me to heal."

Tony swore. He knew there was nothing he could do at the moment. With one last cursory look around the room, he gave up and laid down next to Peter, fingers inching forward to grasp Peter's.

"I'm sorry I can't help you," Tony whispered, eyes burning.

"I never expected you to," Peter curled closer, "I'm not your responsibility, Tony. It's okay."

Tony swallowed. "This whole Iron Man thing is a lie."

"Iron Man isn't a lie," Peter poked him in the ribs weakly, "You've got your brain with you. That's

all you need. If you could build that suit in a cave, I have no doubt that you're doing something right now too."

"I am," Tony said quietly.

"Well, there you go," Peter's face twisted in a frown, pain still clear on his face, "I'm glad it was you, you know. There's no one better to be stranded or kidnapped with than Tony Stark."

Tony bit back a sarcastic retort, choosing instead to give him a small smile.

The next day wasn't much better. It was worse. Tony had to wait for three hours before Peter was brought back, and if he'd thought that Peter looked sick the day before, he was on his deathbed this time around.

Tony stayed by his side all night, shushing his whimpers and pleas for mercy. Peter didn't stop shaking for three days straight, skin hot to the touch and sweater dirtied with vomit. Tony removed the sweater eventually, using it as a rag to wipe at Peter's mouth.

When Peter started to rapidly cool down on the fourth day, Tony was worried that this would be it. Peter's life would end in pain and misery, Tony right next to him, cradling his dead body.

Peter stopped trembling in the middle of the night, his body relaxing for the first time in days as the tension left his body. He looked peaceful, sleeping with his head tucked into the crook of Tony's neck, each breath an answer to Tony's prayers.

Tony dared to hope, then, that Peter would pull through. This sickness had wrecked both him and Peter. Hearing Peter cry for relief that wouldn't come had to have been the worst experience of Tony's life.

Each time that Tony was dragged to the workshop in those dreadful few days, he couldn't concentrate much on his work, the only force driving him being the thought of getting Peter out. He couldn't stop thinking about whether that day would be the day Peter died, alone and hurting, without Tony to comfort him in his last moments.

Thankfully, that wasn't something to worry about anymore. The sickness truly seemed to be gone, Tony noted, not taking his eyes off of Peter's resting face.

When Peter woke up, he did so with tears of happiness, crying silently into Tony's neck so as to not wake him. The older man deserved all the rest he could get, having spent each night awake to take care of Peter.

Something was different, though. Peter blinked at the room several times, confusion rising when he realized that everything looked clearer and sharper, dust particles visible in the air and -- was that Tony's heartbeat?

Realization set in as his memories came rushing back of that fateful spider being set on his chest by the doctors in HYDRA, nudging it until it finally bit him. Their experiment definitely worked, because Peter knew this wasn't what the world used to look like. If he focused, he could hear the bustling of the guards and the soft murmurs of their voices, even several of their heartbeats.

Now that he wasn't actively dying, they'd come for him and make him test just how far his abilities could stretch. Peter groaned loudly, falling back into his spot next to Tony and accidentally waking him.

"How do you feel?" Tony yawned, the urgency of the question still present despite his tiredness.

“Perfect,” Peter promised him, “Better than perfect, actually. Their experiment worked.”

“What experiment?” Tony asked warily.

“After figuring out my healing factor, they decided going through with giving me more abilities was worth the risk of me dying,” Peter fiddled with Tony’s fingers distractedly, “I guess me getting sick was my body transitioning and accepting the changes. They’re probably gonna come and get me again, figure out what I can do now.”

Tony pulled his fingers out of Peter’s hand to wrap them around his wrist protectively. “They’re not taking you anywhere if I can help it. What abilities do you think you have?”

“I can’t tell all of them yet, but I know I have better sight and hearing. I can hear your heartbeat right now.” Peter grinned.

“That’s not fair,” Tony pouted in response, “I’ll never be able to lie without you knowing.”

“Sorry, dude,” Peter laughed, listening to the way Tony’s heart sped up when he did.

“Did you just call me ‘dude’?” Tony asked incredulously.

Peter kissed his cheek in response, butterflies tickling him from the inside despite his confidence.

Tony was taken aback, having forgotten temporarily of their new relationship status. He dove forward before Peter could regret his move, peppering his face with kisses of his own.

“I didn’t realize you were so touchy.” Peter commented, blushing slightly.

Tony clambered onto Peter’s chest, bracketing him with the arms he was using to hold himself up. “Should I stop?”

“Never,” Peter pulled him down the rest of the way, getting him to fall onto his chest rather than hover over it.

“I changed my mind, by the way,” Tony mentioned casually, “I still think it’d be too fast if we moved on from friends with benefits to having an actual relationship, but I watched you almost die. I don’t care anymore, so if you still want to...”

“Oh?” Peter colored in surprise. “I do want to.”

“Yeah?” Tony perked up.

“Yeah.”

Tony went to kiss Peter, a giddy feeling bubbling up in his stomach, but the door opened before he could. Tony was starting to really hate that door.

“How sweet,” Jack eyed the display, before crooking his finger at Peter, “Get up, Parker.”

Peter rolled his eyes and helped Tony slide off of him. Tony pursed his lips as he watched him head towards Jack.

“Let me come with him,” Tony begged. Peter sent him a reassuring look.

Jack answered automatically, “You need to finish the AI.”

Tony sighed and waited for Scarface to come get him.

Chapter 9

Tony knew he had to hurry. He needed to finish working before HYDRA could get any new ideas about what to do with Peter. Tony had heard all kinds of horror stories about the organization, and he didn't want Peter to, say, get all his memories wiped and become an assassin.

He sped up at the thought, running the A.I. through a far-too-slow scan to check it for any mistakes. While the scan did its work, he pulled out his watch from where it was tucked into his boxers, snatching a stray screwdriver from a nearby table and dumping both on the one in front of him.

His focus had mainly been split between Peter and the A.I. Now that both could temporarily be set aside, he could finally fix his watch.

Tony was lucky that Scarface had deemed the watch unimportant and allowed him to keep it. What with it looking like any other expensive watch, he was surprised that it hadn't been pawned off by the agents. He supposed the fact that it was no longer ticking might have played a role in that.

He pried it open with the screwdriver, searching for the parts that needed to be fixed. The crown, which was used both to change the time and trigger the gauntlet, was jammed. As far as Tony could tell, that was the only issue.

His watch wasn't meant to be waterproof. A horrible oversight on his part, but he'd deal with that at home. He carried his things to one of the sinks, turning on the tap and letting the water stream out. Tony held the watch under the water and carefully began to scrape at the gunk covering the watch with the screwdriver.

The fix was easy. Tony's watch had gotten caked with seaweed and hardened sand, which got into the crevices of the crown and prevented it from moving. He scrubbed the dirt with impatient strokes, chipping away until all that was left were a few grainy patches of sand, which were washed away seconds later.

Tony let the watch air dry for a few minutes, ambling over to the scan to check its progress. It was three quarters of the way done, he noted with satisfaction. After running a hand along the watch to check its state, he deemed it dry enough to see if it worked.

He twisted the crown and pulled it up, activating the gauntlet and allowing the nanoparticles to come together. They moved fluidly and quickly, the red and gold gleaming under the straining lights.

Tony let out a quiet whoop, excitement thrumming through his veins. The gauntlet was enough to get him and Peter out. He stashed the gauntlet in one of the desk drawers, hiding it from view in case Scarface came to check on him.

Fifteen minutes. That was all it would take. The tracker had activated as soon as the gauntlet did, and once the obligatory fifteen minutes passed, FRIDAY would send his location to the Avengers.

“Scan complete,” the computer announced.

Tony pulled it closer and looked over the statistics. Everything had gone right; the A.I. was completed, and with nothing to correct. Call him a narcissist, but he'd expected nothing less.

“Come online, EAR,” Tony commanded.

EAR spoke for the first time, “Escape And Rescue online.”

“Alright, don’t speak in third person, it’s weird,” Tony instructed faintly, his weak knees pushing him onto a stool.

Everything was going right. He couldn’t believe it.

“Yes, sir. Awaiting instruction.”

Tony cleared his throat, pushing aside his high-strung emotions. He couldn’t wait to tell Peter about this.

“Let’s start with the cameras. Shut them off everywhere in this building, then tell me where Peter is.”

“Peter, sir?” EAR questioned.

Tony nodded, a small smile slipping onto his face, “In his twenties, brown hair, brown eyes. Has a stained and ripped sweater -- jeans too. Also very, very attractive.”

EAR paused for a few moments. “The individual I believe to be ‘Peter’ is located on the second floor, in surgery room number four. The room requires a handprint to get in.”

Tony felt sick, “Surgery room?”

“I am unsure as to what the surgeons are hoping to accomplish, but they have not started the procedure yet,” EAR said calmly.

“We need to stop them,” Tony cracked his knuckles tensely, “Do something before they can start.”

“Lights have been turned off in surgery room number four.” EAR informed him.

Tony laughed in relief, shoulders relaxing slightly, “Genius. Go ahead and do that to the rest of the building.”

The lights in the lab shut off just as Tony grabbed his gauntlet from the drawer. He put it on, aiming it in front of him so that the repulsor could light up his path.

“Unlock that door for me, EAR,” Tony requested, sliding on his earpiece so that he could communicate with the A.I.

“Right away, sir.”

The door gave an audible click and unlatched. Tony slipped past the door and clung to the walls, creeping slowly through the pitch black hallways. Above him, an intercom turned on, and out crackled a displeased voice:

“There has been a power outage. The backup generators have failed, and we are working to figure out why. Stop all procedures and make your way outside.”

Tony heard a distant rumble of hasty footsteps. He fumbled his way through the corridor until he found a door that led to a stairwell.

Tony hesitated. “What floor am I on?”

“The third,” EAR whispered, likely sensing the need to be quiet.

Tony went down a flight of stairs and cautiously pushed open the door that let him into the second floor. After checking that the coast was clear, he shone his gauntlet at each door he passed in the hall, until finally, he found the one numbered with a silver four.

Once he got confirmation from EAR that Peter was the only one inside, the A.I. unlocked the door for him, and he went in.

Peter was laying stiffly in a bed, hooked up to all kinds of different monitors. He was already facing the door when Tony came in, eyes wide and alert, and they only widened further when he saw who his visitor was.

“Are you okay?” Tony asked in a hushed voice, crouching by his bedside to begin unhooking the monitors.

“I’m fine,” Peter eyed him in awe, taking in the repulsor with elation, “You’re gonna tell me everything later.”

“I will,” Tony confirmed, “All the agents should be outside, so we should be able to get on the roof without interference.”

“How are we going to leave?” Peter swung his legs over the side of the bed, and Tony saw for the first time that he was clad in a gown that exposed his muscled back.

Tony tore his eyes away. “Remember the tracker? Fifteen minutes have passed since the tracker was triggered, so an Iron Man suit should be on the way, along with the Avengers. Since we can’t rely on the team being here on time, I’ll have to fly you in the suit.”

“Can I fly the suit?” Peter implored, shamelessly turning his puppy eyes Tony’s way.

“Another time, honey,” Tony promised.

Peter jumped off of the bed, slipping his hand into Tony’s to lead him out into the hall. Tony tugged on his hand, trying to get him to stop, but Peter’s strength was far more superior to Tony’s now.

“Pete,” Tony tried, “We have to check to see if there’s anyone walking around.”

Peter shook his head and pulled him into the stairwell, “All the heartbeats are outside.”

Tony blinked at him a few times, “I forgot you could do that now.”

Peter shot him a sly grin, then turned and swept him off his feet, carrying him bridal style up the stairs. Tony yelped and clung onto his neck, careful to keep the gauntlet pointed at the wall and away from Peter.

“Turns out I have super strength too.” Peter told him, forehead clear of any signs of sweat. His breathing was steady as always as he jogged up the stairs.

Tony’s eyes darkened, “I have some ideas for how we can use that later.”

“Let’s at least escape before we talk about that,” Peter kicked open the door leading to the roof and it flew off of its hinges, falling to the floor with a loud clang.

Tony shuddered at the display of strength, arousal curling in his stomach. Peter set him down with

a smug look, as if he knew exactly what Tony was thinking.

Off in the distance, a familiar red and gold suit was hurtling towards them at a frightening speed. Below them, the agents started shouting and shooting at the suit, and soon a deafening alarm was blaring throughout the entire building.

Peter clapped his hands over his ears, unable to handle such sounds anymore. Tony held his own hands over Peter's, hoping to provide his sensitive eardrums with more protection.

The suit landed on the roof, completely unaffected by the bullets and tasers thrown at it. It opened and Tony stepped in, relaxing completely now that he was in a familiar environment.

He grabbed Peter and shot into the sky.

Chapter 10

They'd been flying for thirty minutes and Peter was shaking harder than a baby deer learning to walk. It was freezing so high up in the sky, and the wind was continuously dousing him in icy air.

Luckily for him, they crossed paths with the Quinjet before he could start cursing out the sky. Tony had moved to the side of the plane and flown next to it while he waited for the door to open. It slid open and Tony went in, holding Peter firmly until the door closed. When it did, it cut off the wind, and Peter could feel himself slowly start to warm up.

When Tony got out of his armor, Peter pitched forward and into his embrace, seeking both heat and reassurance.

"We did it, Pete," Tony breathed, stroking his hair, "We're safe."

To his horror, Peter's eyes were welling up with tears, and the grip he had on Tony was bordering on painful. Peter felt incredibly overwhelmed, shoulders shaking as he tried his hardest to suppress his sobs.

"You saved me," Peter choked out, "I can't believe I'm coming home."

Tony shushed him quietly, swaying side to side to soothe him. The rocking motion seemed to be doing its job, and just in time, too, because the couple heard someone clear their throat behind them.

Peter shoved his tears away and took a step back from Tony. Tony didn't let him go far, keeping a grounding hold on his hip.

"Tony, man, how many times are you going to go missing?" James Rhodes stalked towards them and pulled Tony into a tight hug.

"Yeah, well, I don't really know what happened, so if anyone wants to fill me in...?" Tony looked around and saw that everyone on the team was there, looking mildly bemused.

Natasha crossed her arms. "What's the last thing you remember?"

"Conference in Indonesia," Tony said slowly, his grip on Peter now for his own benefit as panic started to form in his chest.

The Avengers exchanged bewildered looks.

"After your conference, you were called in for an emergency mission," Steve seemed a bit disgruntled, "And you showed up in your underwear. You said something about how we shouldn't call you in, in the middle of the night and expect you to be dressed and ready."

"That's valid," Tony shrugged nonchalantly.

Steve rolled his eyes, "SHIELD found a cruise ship operated by criminals. They were shipping alien tech to other countries under the guise of being a vacation ship, but we caught them. One of those weapons cut through your suit, and you were knocked into the water. We didn't notice you were gone until after the mission was over, and by then you'd drifted away."

"You're lucky you didn't drown," Peter muttered, sounding concerned, "You probably hit your

head at some point, that's why you don't remember this.”

“Who's the guy?” Sam asked Tony.

Peter cut in before Tony could answer, “Peter Parker. I can speak for myself, thanks.”

Tony sent him a proud smile that had him leaning into his side, feeling fuzzy and warm all over.

“So you go missing and get yourself a fuck buddy,” Sam shook his head, avoiding Peter's eyes after his remark and choosing to keep looking at Tony, “Teach me your ways.”

Tony wrinkled his nose, “Boyfriend, actually.”

“Isn't he a bit young?” Steve asked reproachfully.

“Here we go,” Tony rolled his eyes, annoyance flaring.

Peter narrowed his eyes, standing in front of Tony defensively, “Is this your protocol for when missing team members come back? You don't check on them, you harp on them?”

Steve had the decency to look chastised, “Bruce will look you over. Both of you.”

Bruce waved them closer, and Peter weaved in and out between the team members, tugging Tony along behind him and glaring at them as he went.

“You didn't tell me you had assholes on the team,” Peter complained, not bothering to lower his voice.

Tony snorted, hiding his laughter in Peter's back, “You just keep getting better every day, you know that?”

Peter passed him an adoring smile.

“How are you two feeling? Any injuries?” Bruce interrupted, ushering them to a bench and getting them to sit down.

“We're good, I think,” Tony glanced at Peter to make sure.

Peter sent him a thumbs up, “I'd like a blanket if you have one, though, please.”

Bruce reached into a cabinet and picked up a folded electric blanket. He handed it to Peter, who thanked him gratefully and wrapped it around his own shoulders. After remembering that Tony was only clad in boxers, he pulled Tony onto his lap and covered him with the blanket, too.

Tony leaned back into his chest, his own small shivers slowing to a stop, He smiled up at Peter in thanks and turned back to Bruce.

“So, what did I miss?” He asked casually.

Bruce sat down on the bench across from them, “Nothing, really. There were search parties sent out to look for you, and Pepper took care of Stark Industries.”

“Good,” Tony relaxed, dropping his head onto Peter's shoulder.

“You should get some sleep. You look exhausted,” Bruce commented.

Peter piped up before Tony could brush off the comment, “Bruce is right. You didn’t get much sleep at HYDRA.”

Tony sighed deeply, “You two are always going to gang up on me, aren’t you? I can feel it.”

Bruce and Peter grinned at each other sheepishly.

Tony rolled his eyes but got more comfortable in Peter’s lap, bringing the blanket up to his chin and allowing Peter to hug him closer. With Peter’s warm grasp and the knowledge that he’d be protected while he slept, it didn’t take long for him to succumb to the snug tendrils of sleep.

The Avengers took advantage of Tony’s incapacitated state and crowded around Peter, plopping onto the benches near him. Peter knew, logically, that they were the good guys, but Tony hadn’t spoken of them much, and probably for good reason.

He held Tony just a bit tighter.

“What happened to you guys? Where were you?” Rhodey was the first to break the silence, brotherly distress clear on his face.

Peter chewed on his bottom lip for a moment, “An island. I don’t really know where it is, but HYDRA found us on it and, yeah. Tony will have to explain how we escaped, because he was the one who got us out, and he hasn’t told me how.”

“Why were you on the island?” Natasha questioned.

Peter looked uncomfortable, “I don’t feel like getting into all of that yet.”

“Back off, Romanoff,” Tony grumbled, eyes cracking open tiredly, “All of you, shut up. I’m trying to sleep.”

Peter ran his hands over Tony’s arms, lulling him back to sleep. When Steve opened his mouth, Peter scowled at him, shutting him up before he could speak.

They landed forty-five minutes later on the tarmac behind the Avengers Compound. Peter kept his eyes peeled the entire time, hungrily drinking in his first view of civilization in years. The compound was big and grey, stretching out across the lawn and forming intimidating shadows across the long driveway.

Peter stood up with Tony cocooned in the blanket, carrying him out of the jet and onto the property.

“Shouldn’t we wake him up?” Clint gestured to where Tony’s head was resting on Peter’s collarbone.

Peter hesitated. He wanted Tony to get as much sleep as he could, but he also knew that Tony was a powerful man and couldn’t be seen by others when swaddled like a baby. He personally thought that Tony’s image shouldn’t be affected by that, but he knew that others may not take Tony seriously after seeing him asleep.

With a disappointed huff, he set Tony down on his feet, holding his waist so that he wouldn’t fall over. He shook him awake, holding back a smile at the way Tony’s indignant eyes stared back at him, clearly still half-asleep.

“Wake up, sugar lips,” Peter urged, cringing despite himself at the pet name.

Tony's eyes snapped open, "Don't take this the wrong way, gorgeous, but call me that again and I'll gouge your eyes out."

"It did its job, didn't it?" Peter snickered, letting go of his waist to start trudging to the compound.

Tony squinted at him, "You did that on purpose. I don't know if I should be happy about that."

"I mean, would you rather I call you sugar lips unironically, and you get to sleep, or I don't call you that at all, but you don't get to sleep?" Peter looked back at him with a knowing grin.

Tony jogged over to catch up to him, "Fine, you win."

Rhodey broke away from the team and joined them, "You know, I wasn't sure about this at first. But after witnessing this conversation, I think it's gonna be fun to have you around, Parker."

"Thanks," Peter paused, "I think."

Soon enough, they were all seated at a round table in one of the meeting rooms at the compound. Tony breezed through everything that had happened in the past few weeks, keeping everything short and to the point. He was doing a good job of keeping himself awake -- he was clearly used to feeling tired -- but Peter noticed it when he blinked for just a second too long.

Peter was quick to get him out of the room when the debrief was over. "Got a room I can stay in?"

"Yeah," Tony said confidently, "Mine."

Peter didn't argue, contentedly following him through the wide halls. The compound was very different from the HYDRA facility, he noticed. It was big and bright, light streaming in from the glass windows. It was the perfect combination of professional and inviting.

Tony's room was enormous. It was simple, furniture-wise, but otherwise very cluttered. There were electronics, blueprints, and screwdrivers piled on the russet drawers sandwiching the bed. The bed was the biggest one Peter had ever seen, and it took everything in him to stop himself from rolling around in it. It had a fluffy grey comforter, and after lifting it, Peter saw that the mattress was covered in unwrinkled black sheets.

"We can change things up, if you want," Tony offered, "Make sure the room is up to your standards."

"Why, Mr. Stark," Peter gasped, fluttering his lashes dramatically, "Are you asking me to move in?"

Tony punched him in the arm playfully, "Real funny. You are moving in, though, right? I assumed that that was what we were doing. You can have your own room, if you don't want to share mine."

Peter kissed his cheek fondly, "Yeah, I'll move in with you. Do you really live at the compound?"

Tony cheered, pumping his fist in the air before he calmed down and said, "I do live here. I sold the tower I had in Manhattan, but we can get a place in the city, if you want to go back."

"I feel like you're leaving way too many important decisions up to me," Peter shook his head, stuck on whether he should be feeling amused or concerned, "Do you usually move this fast in your relationships?"

Tony scratched his hand as he thought, 'I've only ever had one actual relationship, so. Who

knows?"

Peter nodded in acceptance, "Well, we can talk about all of that later. There's only one thing I want to do right now."

"And what would that be?" Tony sidled up to him, hands settling on his hips suggestively.

Peter glanced longingly at the ensuite, "I'd really like to take a shower."

Chapter 11

Much to Tony's disappointment, they showered separately. Peter claimed the ensuite before Tony could take a single step towards it, citing that three years without a shower was far worse than a few weeks.

Tony didn't disagree, so he stripped off his boxers and sprawled all over the bed, waiting for his turn. He wasn't sure how long Peter's shower would last for, but when thirty minutes passed and he still wasn't out, Tony opened the door and stepped into the bathroom.

"Peter? You okay?" He called, perching on the counter and hissing when the cold surface made contact with his butt.

The mirror behind him was fogging up, only leaving small patches of it uncovered. He could see the steam rolling out from beneath the glass door of the shower; behind the door, a faint outline of Peter was standing with its head tipped back, scalding water pelting it in the face.

"I'm *amazing*," Peter moaned, hands running through his hair without being stopped by knots for the first time in ages, "and I need a haircut."

"I like your hair long," Tony sulked, "it's fun to play with."

Peter cajoled him easily, "But imagine what I'll look like without my caveman hair. It was all dirty and tangled and long."

"Okay," Tony slipped off the counter and pulled out his phone, "I've been soothed. Do you want me to call in my barber?"

The water shut off, and Peter stepped out of the shower, hair plastered to his tanned shoulders and the back of his neck. Tony perked up and beckoned him closer.

"Let me touch it," Tony buried his fingers in Peter's hair, the soft strands clinging to his hands as he massaged them, "Oh, it's so silky."

Peter grinned and dislodged Tony's hands, ignoring his protests. He snatched a silver pair of scissors from the crystal bowl next to the sink and faced the mirror.

"You're cutting it yourself?" Tony asked, aghast, "At least let me do it. Homemade haircuts never turn out good."

Peter wiped down the fog on the mirror with a towel and positioned himself in front of it, scissors hovering next to his hair.

"I can't watch this," Tony squeezed his eyes shut, despair etched on every inch of his face.

Peter laughed under his breath, shaking his head, "You're so dramatic, darling."

"It's one of my talents," Tony said flippantly, "but keep calling me that. Please."

"What -- dramatic?" Peter asked, feigning confusion.

Tony scowled, "You know what I'm talking about."

"I do," Peter confirmed, before continuing, "darling."

A pleased feeling curled in Tony's chest, spreading a gratifying warmth throughout his body and leaving his skin tingling. It stopped when he heard the telltale snipping of scissors, and the barely audible sound of clumps of hair falling to the ground.

When the snipping ceased, Tony tentatively asked, "Is it safe to look yet?"

"It was always safe," Peter rolled his eyes, "Yes, you can look."

Tony opened his eyes with bated breath. Peter's previously shoulder-length hair was now trimmed and not touching his neck in any way. His forehead was no longer covered, the hair that usually fell onto it slicked back with water. A few of his curls stuck out anyway, and Tony knew then and there that he was going to enjoy tugging at them.

"Should I fire my barber?" Tony murmured, invading Peter's personal space to caress his head.

Peter snorted, "Someone's mood switched fast."

"I was wrong, I'll admit it," Tony said reluctantly, "How are you so good at this?"

Peter smiled at him, sad and reminiscent, "My uncle taught me. We weren't dirt poor, exactly, but if haircuts could be done at home, why spend money on them?"

"I wish I could've met him," Tony mumbled, eyes softening at the admission.

"He would've liked you," Peter said proudly, "it would've taken a while for him to get over the age difference, but I know he would've liked you."

The remark slipped out before Tony could reel it in. "At least I don't have to go through the stress of meeting your parents."

The silence was deafening.

Tony bit the inside of his cheek hard enough that it started bleeding, mortified, "I'm sorry, that was insensitive."

"Tony," Peter gasped, mirth shining in his eyes, "I don't have to meet yours either."

They fell into hysterics, holding onto each other to avoid collapsing on the floor from the force of their laughter.

"Why is that so funny?" Tony breathed out, wiping at his own eyes to get rid of the tears that his amusement birthed.

"I don't know," Peter shook his head, calming himself down, "but I don't remember my sense of humor being this bad."

"It's me," Tony declared shamelessly, "My humor's rubbing off on you."

Peter's eyes dipped down to Tony's naked lower half. He ran a teasing hand along Tony's flaccid cock, nails lightly tracing the faint veins creeping under the skin. It was slowly but surely filling out, the fleeting touches just barely enough to arouse him. When Tony's cock started to poke him insistently in the thigh, Peter released it from his grasp, leering inwardly at the quiet whine Tony let out in response.

"Take a shower, and you can rub off on me more than your humor does," Peter pressed a lingering kiss to Tony's mouth, then turned and started leaving the ensuite, "I'll be taking some clothes from

your closet, if that's okay."

Tony gave him the affirmative and watched him go, frustrated with the loss of attention to the throbbing between his legs, but delighted that Peter already seemed so comfortable in Tony's home.

He swung open the shower door and stepped in, already switching on the water and lathering his hands in shampoo. He had a boyfriend to get back to, after all.

Two hours and some powerful orgasms later, they were hidden under the blankets of their newly shared bed. Peter was resting partly on Tony's chest and partly on the sheets he'd accidentally torn in the throes of passion, his advanced strength turning out to be a hindrance in that sense.

"What's going to happen now?" Peter asked, breaching the quiet shyly.

"What do you mean?" Tony propped himself up on an elbow, watching Peter's chest rise and fall with his breaths. He placed his palm on it, drawing mindless circles on his sternum.

"I mean," Peter drummed his fingers on Tony's hand, "What are we doing tomorrow? What will happen in the future?"

Tony hummed thoughtfully, moving his elbow and rolling onto his back. When he felt the warmth of Peter's body shift closer to his, he hooked an arm over his waist and pulled him flush against him.

"Anything you want to do, you can do," Tony announced, "I'll have to get FRIDAY to give you clearance to everything in the building. If you want, I can have a doctor look you over. Who knows what your body's like after everything that's happened in the past few years?"

Peter hesitated, "I don't want anyone to know that I'm enhanced."

"No one has to know," Tony assured him, "The doctors work with the Avengers and are all signed to secrecy. The team might suspect that there's something different about you, but we'll cross that bridge when we get to it."

"Okay," Peter nodded, the slightly damp hair on his head tickling Tony's chin, "I'll set up an appointment with your doctor."

Tony smiled, "Great."

"Do you think I should go to college?" Peter peered up at him uncertainly, "I mean, it'd be kind of lame, being a twenty-one year old sophomore. Unless I have to redo freshman year, which would be even worse."

"Don't worry about your age. If that's what you want to do, you can do it." Tony said firmly.

Peter weighed the pros and cons in his mind, "I think I'll do it online. Then I can get a job and do both at the same time."

"Are you sure? You don't have to work yet. I don't want you to be too stressed," Tony fretted.

"Stress won't be an issue," Peter laughed, the air fanning Tony's torso, "The issue will be finding someone to hire me."

Tony raised his eyebrows dubiously, "You're looking at the owner of a Fortune 500 company."

“I want to earn my spot,” Peter shook his head immediately, “It’s not fair if you just give me the job.”

“Then I’ll bring you to my lab and we’ll see if you deserve a spot in my company,” Tony conceded easily, “and I have no doubt that you do.”

“You’ve never seen me work,” Peter frowned.

“I’ve spoken to you about it,” Tony countered, “and I think you’re brilliant.”

Peter gave up, planting a thankful kiss to Tony’s brow and cuddling closer. Tony hiked up the blanket and settled into the numerous pillows beneath their heads. With everything temporarily squared away, they let the exhaustion wash over them and drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 12

Tony woke up way earlier than he wanted to. After checking his phone, he confirmed that, yes, he really was up at the crack of dawn. He grunted in annoyance and rolled onto his side to face Peter.

Except, Peter wasn't there. Tony patted the sheets lightly and frowned when they came back cold. The light in the bathroom wasn't on, so Tony sat up and pushed the blanket off of his chest.

"FRI?" Tony asked tentatively, "I didn't dream up going missing, did I?"

He wouldn't be surprised if he did. Peter was way too good for him; of course he'd also be a figment of Tony's imagination. Tony had probably been on a 72 hour lab binge again. Or maybe he'd been drinking, except Tony was almost two years sober, and he couldn't think of anything that would drive him back to using alcohol as a crutch.

"No, Boss."

Tony perked up, his sullen mood fading away as he placed his feet on the carpeted floor, "Then where is Peter?"

"Mr. Parker is in your kitchen." FRIDAY said

"Call him Peter," Tony instructed, pushing down the handle on his door and stepping into the hallway, "Or maybe sweetcheeks. Honeybun. Sugar. Sweetie-pie. Your pick, FRI."

"Don't call me any of that," Peter called from the kitchen, his voice echoing slightly.

Tony cursed. He'd wanted to pull one over on Peter, but it looked like his super hearing wouldn't let that happen any time soon.

"Why are you up so early?" Tony turned the corner and entered the kitchen, where Peter was sitting at the counter with his chin in his hand.

"I couldn't sleep," Peter turned to watch him make his way to him, "the bed was too soft."

Tony nodded in understanding, "I can get a different mattress."

"No, no, I'll be fine," Peter assured him, "It will just take a while. I got used to sleeping on the ground."

"Ah," Tony hopped onto the stool next to him, hooking his ankle around Peter's, "We can sleep on the couch, if you want. It's soft but not as soft as the bed is, so you'll be able to work up to sleeping in bed."

"We?" Peter raised his eyebrows, "Don't ruin your sleep on my account."

Tony looked exasperated, "Honey, in case you didn't notice, I'm up at the asscrack of dawn. My sleeping schedule has been terrible my entire life."

"I'd feel guilty, though," Peter defended feebly, "You would be more comfortable in bed."

"I want to sleep with you," Tony pointed out, "I'll be sleeping on the couch. You can join me, or not."

Peter scowled, but there was a pleased glint in his eyes, “You are so stubborn.”

“Don’t I know it,” Tony got off of the chair and went around the kitchen, rummaging through his fridge and cabinets, “You hungry?”

“Can you cook, or will I be signing my death wish by saying yes?” Peter teased.

“You are talking to the best cook in the world,” Tony said haughtily, “Watch and learn, sweetheart.”

“‘Best cook in the world’, my ass,” Peter choked on his burnt omelette fifteen minutes later, eyes watering, “You’re never cooking again.”

“It’s not that bad,” Tony refused to back down, shoveling forkfuls of his omelette into his mouth and trying not to gag.

“Oh yeah?” Peter challenged, “Then you can have mine, too.”

“Pete,” Tony spluttered, tears springing to his eyes when the abundant amount of pepper hit the back of his throat, “No.”

Peter snorted to himself and stood up to scrape the charred remains of his omelette into the trash.

“I don’t think I have much of an appetite, anymore,” Peter said sorrowfully, “but it was an interesting first meal back in the States.”

Tony dumped his own food in the trash and set his plate in the sink, “We should set up that appointment now.”

“Tony, it’s like, five in the morning.” Peter said incredulously.

Tony shrugged, “So? I have them on retainer.”

“I’d quit on the spot if you called me at five in the morning just to schedule an appointment,” Peter shook his head, “Let them sleep.”

“Alright, alright,” Tony lifted his hands in surrender, “Do you want to go out today?”

“I don’t know,” Peter twisted his hands as he thought, “I don’t feel like driving to the city. That will take hours.”

“So you *do* want to live in the city,” Tony mused.

“That’s not what I said,” Peter sounded confused, “You asked if I wanted to go out.”

“Pete,” Tony gentled his tone, “You love the city. I know you do, and I don’t need you to tell me you want to live there for me to know. If that’s where you want to be, we can go. Upstate’s boring, anyway, and I’d rather be close if you decide to go to college in the city.”

When Peter didn’t say anything, he went on, “Unless...do you want to live alone? I can set you up with a place, I know it’s probably too soon to be speaking in ‘we’s’.”

“No,” Peter shook his head profusely, “I do want to live with you. I just -- are you sure you want to live in the city? What about SI and the Avengers?”

Tony held his hands in his own, squeezing them gently, “We have multiple buildings for SI. We

may have sold one, but we have a couple of smaller, more discreet buildings. My suit can get me anywhere I need to go faster than a plane can, so I wouldn't be too worried about the team."

Peter stared at him for a long moment, conflicted, and finally said, "Okay. Okay, yeah, let's do it."

Tony pulled him into a bruising kiss, giddiness pooling into his chest and making him vibrate where he stood with Peter.

Peter pulled away with his cheeks on fire, "If we break up, though, give me a few days to find a new place. I'd rather not live on the streets."

"Peter," Tony muttered, caressing his cheeks to feel the warmth radiating from them, "the day we break up is the day I've finally lost it. Do you really think I'd let you go?"

Peter's eyes bore into his, his gaze intense with unbridled emotion, "You really are a sap."

"Me?" Tony scoffed, "Never. Now let's go find our future home."

Peter rolled his eyes but followed Tony back into the bedroom, curling up under the blankets while he waited for him to boot up the laptop. When it turned on, Tony settled in next to him and balanced it on his knees.

Tony tilted the screen slightly so that Peter could have a better view of the website, "Alright. Let's start off with -- what, 20 million? I have a feeling you'll want something small. I'm used to bigger, though, so maybe we'll compromise at 100?"

Peter stared at him with a slack jaw, "*What?*"

Chapter 13

Peter found himself growing increasingly nervous the closer he got to the room his doctor was waiting in. Despite knowing that this doctor was good -- good enough to be trusted by Tony, even -- he couldn't help but wonder if this one would strap him down on a table, too. Shove a bloody rag in his mouth to keep him quiet, plunge needles and scalpels into his skin without bothering to give him anesthesia first, tighten the cuffs restraining his hands and feet whenever he bucked as a result of the pain, tears streaming from his eyes as he whimpered and begged for mercy; mercy that wouldn't come.

A hand touched his, bringing him back to the compound he was walking through. Tony was watching him with a small frown that curved his lips downward, apprehension lining his face as he opened his mouth to speak.

"Are you back with me?" he murmured.

"Yeah," Peter confirmed, a shaky exhale escaping his mouth, "Sorry."

Tony pursed his lips. "This isn't something you need to apologize for. We can postpone the appointment until you're ready to go, if you want. Lord knows I've skipped out on tons of things."

"I think I'll be fine," Peter tried for a weak smile, "Do you mind coming with me?"

"Isn't that what I'm doing?" Tony tilted his head in confusion.

"No, I mean," Peter swallowed roughly, "Can you stay with me the whole time? Even if he asks you to leave the room."

Tony's eyes softened, and he slipped his palm into Peter's, leading him through the halls with natural confidence. It was funny, Tony thought, that he was so easily affectionate with Peter. Before him, he hadn't ever been the one to offer or ask for contact. He was touch starved as hell -- he was self aware enough to know that -- but he usually just took what he was offered instead of requesting for more. He was comfortable with Peter, though. And he liked that. A lot.

He pushed open one of the double doors leading to the medbay, wincing when Peter tightened his grip on his hand with a strength that hadn't existed before their run-in with HYDRA.

"Mr. Stark, Mr. Parker," the doctor walked towards them with an extended hand, shaking both of theirs before dropping it, "Good afternoon."

They nodded in response, sitting in the chairs provided for them and waiting expectantly for him to continue.

"My name is Dr. Gonzalez," the man smiled warmly, "We'll be doing a regular check up. I'll check your weight and heart, listen to your pulse. The basics. After that, we'll move on to bloodwork and making sure you're up to date on vaccines. Mr. Stark mentioned on the phone that you sustained several injuries, and I want to check on those, because there's no guarantee that they healed correctly on their own."

Peter sucked in a breath that rattled his lungs, panic washing over him in waves, "No. No bloodwork, or needles, or anything like that. Please."

The doctor hesitated, glancing at Tony in search of backup that he wouldn't provide, "Mr. Parker,

we need to see if HYDRA changed anything in your DNA. I don't think there's a way your newfound abilities could have come without altering something in your body."

Peter shook his head vehemently, stumbling onto his feet and wrenching his hand away from Tony's, moving to the doors behind him with a wild look in his eyes. Tony jumped up, reaching him in two steps and grabbing his arms, desperately trying to get him to look at him.

"Peter," Tony pulled him closer, every instinct in him aching to let him go, let him feel safe, "Honey, you don't have to do any of that, alright? I promise. But let's get the checkup done."

Peter stopped trying to push his hands off, watching him with reluctance and slight betrayal. For a horrible moment, Tony wondered if this was where Peter's trust in him would disappear, if this was the end of his dependence on him. He hoped with everything in him that this wasn't it. He was on Peter's side here, whether the younger man knew it at the moment or not; he wanted to ensure that Peter was alright physically as well as mentally, and the former couldn't be done without at least a checkup.

Maybe Peter would realize that when fear stopped controlling his actions. Tony didn't blame him for being so terrified and paranoid; he couldn't let anyone touch his arc reactor after Stane's attempted murder.

Peter nodded tightly and sat on the edge of his chair, spine straight and stiffer than a board. Tony placed a supportive hand on the small of his back and nodded at Dr. Gonzalez to proceed with the appointment.

It ended fairly quickly now that Peter's discomfort was apparent to the doctor. The couple was free to leave after twenty minutes, and Tony was more than happy to escort his lover to their living quarters.

They passed Rhodey on their way back, who was blessedly off duty and going out for drinks. He invited them to join him, mentioning that Sam was coming, too.

"In the afternoon?" Tony asked, genuine surprise coloring his voice, "That's new."

Rhodey slid his hands into his pockets easily, "Yeah, well. I've got to relax sometimes."

Tony nodded slowly, "I'm sober now, so I don't think going for drinks will do me any good. Thanks for the offer, though."

Rhodey looked away from him with an approving smile, pride twinkling in the gaze he directed at Peter, "What about you, Parker? Up for some drinks?"

Tony anticipated the opposite. He knew that they'd separate for one reason or the other at some point, but that didn't mean he wanted to. He wanted to enjoy the honeymoon phase of their relationship for as long as possible, and that included being in Peter's presence 24/7.

And maybe he was scared to let Peter out of his sight for too long. Maybe he thought that the second he turned away, Peter would be snatched off the street and hurt again.

Maybe.

"I'm okay, thank you," Peter declined gratefully, "I'll go with you on another day, for sure."

Rhodey inclined his head in understanding, "Take care. Both of you."

They continued their trip to the suite, and Peter turned his head to look at Tony with a gleeful smile, “I think he likes me.”

Tony paused, a smile of his own spreading at the happiness on Peter’s face, “Well, I don’t think you need to expect a shovel talk.”

“Cool,” Peter beamed.

Tony’s chest warmed with fondness, “Very cool.”

Chapter 14

Peter and Tony were rarely seen apart, so when Natasha saw Peter by himself in the communal kitchen, she took her opportunity and pounced. She snatched his wrist, not caring that her nails were digging into his skin, and shoved him into the wall.

Peter didn't seem remotely afraid, only glaring at her scathingly, and it aggravated her further.

"Who are you really, and what are your intentions with Tony?" She asked icily.

"You already know who I am," Peter shrugged, "And I think it's obvious what I'm doing with Tony, considering he already told everyone that we're dating. Aren't you supposed to be a good spy?"

Natasha ignored the remark and pushed her nails in deeper, "Tony doesn't date. He has sex, he leaves, and the cycle starts over. So, I'll rephrase -- what are you planning on doing to Tony?"

"Nothing," Peter simpered, "Maybe I'll top tonight, but other than that, I don't have any plans coming up."

"You know that's not what I'm asking," Natasha hissed, doing her best to keep her composure, "I want to know if you're going to stab him in the back."

Peter looked her over, unimpressed, "What, like you did?"

"I do what I need to do to keep the team together," Natasha defended.

"Right, right," Peter nodded, a malicious smile stretching his face, "So, lying about his parents' deaths, changing sides in the middle of battle, injecting his neck without permission; was all of that for the betterment of the team, or for the betterment of you?"

Natasha scowled, her eyes darkening more and more with each second, "You weren't here, you don't know what went down. And I don't need to explain myself to you."

"But you're doing it anyway," Peter cocked his head, "You did all of that to get rid of your guilt. You were never doing it for the team -- not at first, anyway -- and especially not for the world."

"You don't know anything," Natasha repeated.

"Maybe not," Peter gave her a hard stare, "I just listened to Tony and came to my own conclusions. This entire team is shitty, and honestly, Tony would be better off working solo again."

Natasha hummed in satisfaction, "So your plan is to get Iron Man off the team. Without him, the team would lose its banking and a lot of power. Smart, but I'm not letting you do that."

"I never said I was going to make him do that," Peter rolled his eyes, "Tony is his own person, though I understand that you're used to manipulating him, so maybe you don't get that. If he wants to keep working with assholes, then he'll keep working with assholes."

"You're not scared of me," Natasha noted, still searching him for any signs of fear, "Why?"

Peter shoved her off of him and stepped away from the wall. "At this point, I've seen worse than you."

Natasha watched him stalk out of the kitchen and enter one of the halls. She straightened her shirt where it got wrinkled from the push, and went the opposite way. She followed the faint sounds of laughter coming from the communal living room, in which her teammates were hanging out and watching tv.

She stood in the doorway until they noticed her, waving her over and adding her into their conversations.

“Is something wrong, Nat?” Steve stared up at her from the couch, brows furrowing in concern.

Natasha brushed off the question, “What do you guys think about Tony’s new fling?”

“Boyfriend,” Clint corrected.

“And since when does Tony date?” Natasha challenged.

“Since Pepper…?” Clint watched her weirdly, “You know that. What’s the actual issue here?”

“I have a confession from Parker,” Natasha said coolly, “He wants Iron Man off the team.”

“Then we tell Stark, and the problem is solved,” Sam shrugged, “No big deal.”

“Except it might be,” Steve looked worried, “Do you think Tony told him any secrets? He could tell them to anyone.”

“So, who volunteers to talk to Stark?” Sam sat up.

“Tony and I used to be close,” Steve assured them. “He’ll listen to me.”

Clint eyed them all doubtfully, but remained seated as Steve left the room. The rest of the group went back to their conversations, not paying any mind to Clint’s silence.

Steve got into the elevator and cleared his throat before saying, “FRIDAY, take me to Tony.”

“You are not authorized to enter the suite.” FRIDAY said bluntly.

“It’s urgent,” Steve insisted, “I need to see him.”

FRIDAY wasn’t moved, “Mr. Stark has a secretary you can speak to if you’d like to schedule an appointment.”

“God, he’s infuriating,” Steve muttered, rubbing his face, “FRIDAY, it’s about the team.”

FRIDAY remained quiet for a moment, “You are not authorized to enter the suite. I will let him know that you would like to confer with him.”

And then, “Boss asks you to ‘kindly fuck off’, as he is spending time with his partner.”

Steve groused, “That’s all he does nowadays. Tell him it’s a life or death situation, then.”

After a minute, the elevator started moving up at a snail’s pace, until finally, it reached Tony’s floor and opened its doors.

Steve wasn’t sure if he was more confused or unsurprised to see Peter and Tony snuggling on the couch. On one hand, Tony had never seemed to enjoy physical contact, keeping his touches minimal and short with others. On the other, he’d been all over Peter the day they arrived at the

compound.

Maybe he was just short with the team. It wasn't a pleasant thought.

"What, Rogers?" Tony sighed dramatically, earning a small giggle from Peter.

Steve wasn't sure how to start the conversation. "You need to break up with Peter."

Tony and Peter glanced at each other, as if to confirm what they'd just heard. Tony shifted his body to trap Peter between him and the couch; likely to keep him safe from Steve, who was offended at the action.

"And why would I do that?" Tony finally asked.

"He wants Iron Man off the team," Steve glared accusingly at Peter.

Tony cooed, turning to press a kiss to Peter's forehead, "Baby, you have the best ideas."

"What?" Steve spluttered, "You can't leave."

"It's a good idea, so I'm glad you brought it up, Rogers," Tony sounded pleased, "I'm moving out of the compound anyway, so it'll be nice to not have to go upstate all the time."

"You're leaving," Steve said sullenly, "Why would you do that?"

"I have a life outside of the Avengers," Tony said simply, "I have SI to focus on, and a boyfriend that needs my attention."

Steve's throat tightened at the last sentence, and he watched Peter warily as he asked, "Tony, is he making you do this? If you're being threatened, I can help you."

Tony's jaw dropped, "Do you know how crazy you sound right now? Look, I appreciate it, but you're the last person I'd ever go to for help. My life is as perfect as it can be right now. There's nothing for you to help with."

"Who will fund the team if you leave?" Steve asked desperately, trying to make him see reason.

"When I leave," Tony corrected, "the government will fund you. Why would I pay for everything, anyway? It doesn't make sense for everything to come out of my pocket. Having money doesn't mean I'm obligated to share it with everyone."

"Tony," Steve scolded, astonished, "that's selfish."

"Then call me selfish," Tony switched on the tv, dismissing him easily, "Let the door hit you on the way out."

Steve stuck around for a few minutes, but neither man was acknowledging him, so he grunted and left the room, shaking his head in annoyance.

"Did you really tell them you want me off the team?" Tony peered at Peter curiously.

"No," Peter shook his head, "I said you'd be better off working solo again, because they're all assholes. I didn't say anything about making you leave."

Tony pulled Peter's legs onto his lap, rubbing his knees subconsciously as he asked, "You're happy I'm leaving, though, right? I know I didn't check in with you first."

“I’m very happy,” Peter confirmed, smiling, “but you don’t have to check in with me about things like that. You’re the one being affected here, and your decisions are for you to make.”

Tony relaxed, “Sorry, it’s just -- Pepper would always get upset if I made any big decisions without talking to her beforehand.”

“You don’t need to do that with me,” Peter assured him.

“I think I’m starting to get that.”

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I feel like I was being really harsh yesterday,” Peter set his spoon on the table, staring at his bowl of soup forlornly.

“What did you do?” Tony asked nonchalantly, leaving his own spoon to focus on him.

Peter looked up. “I know you watched the footage, you don’t have to pretend. I feel like I was too rude to Natasha.”

“Well,” Tony said slowly, thinking his words over before he continued, “You could apologize, if you want. She never did anything to you; she did it to me, and you don’t have to defend me.”

“I meant it, though,” Peter bit his lip, “She can’t act like she’s looking out for you when, half the time, she’s working against you.”

Tony didn’t say anything for a few minutes. “That doesn’t mean you can’t get along with her. I’m the one that has a hard time trusting the team nowadays. Like I said, you can make your own friendships. I wouldn’t be upset if you got along with the team.”

“I don’t want to get along with them,” Peter shook his head, picking up his spoon to dip it into his soup and swirl it around, “I’ve only had a few interactions with them, and I already know I don’t want to be best friends, or anything like that.”

“You don’t have to be best friends,” Tony pointed out, “But you can get along.”

Peter sighed deeply, conflicted, “I don’t know. I mean, I feel bad for being mean. That’s just not who I am... but I can’t ignore that they’ve treated you so badly. Even Thor! I used to love Thor, but now I know he choked you and the rest of the team did nothing to stop him. I guess people are right for saying not to meet your heroes.”

Tony paused, “I should probably be alarmed that you already know so much about my life.”

“I mean,” Peter smiled wryly, “You tend to run out of topics when you’re stuck somewhere with one other person for company. I can tell you about all my trauma, if it’ll make you feel better. Then we’d be even.”

Tony nudged his foot with a smile, “You can do that wherever you want to. No such thing as being even when it comes to this stuff.”

Peter nodded, but soon his smile slipped off, “So should I apologize to Natasha?”

“She’s the one who cornered you,” Tony recalled, frowning, “You’re not completely in the wrong. Bringing up all that stuff, though...maybe you shouldn’t have done that. Or maybe it was justified. I don’t know, honey. This is a bit complicated.”

Peter nodded, running a stressed hand through his hair, “I’ll think about it some more later. Can we talk about something else?”

“Of course,” Tony agreed easily, “What do you think about the penthouse in Brooklyn I showed

you?"

"It's kind of ugly," Peter admitted, laughing at the offended look on Tony's face, "I liked the brownstone a lot more."

"Don't you think it's a little cramped?" Tony wondered.

Peter shook his head adamantly, "It's six million dollars, Tony. It's not cramped. Besides, the places you showed me make me feel like just standing there will get them dirty."

"Six million might be a bit low, I don't know." Tony scratched his beard as he thought.

"Six million is expensive," Peter disagreed, "but the prices of the places you picked are enough to make me faint on the spot."

"The brownstone does have big bedrooms..." Tony trailed off, half-convinced.

"The view from the roof is pretty," Peter added.

"And there's a room I can convert into a workshop," Tony hummed, drumming his fingers on the table, "Alright, I'm sold. Do you want to drive to the city and check it out now?"

Peter swallowed a mouthful of soup and said, "It'll be late by the time we get there, and we still need to make an appointment with the realtor."

"I'll have FRIDAY set one up for tomorrow," Tony stood up and placed his empty bowl in the sink, then took a seat next to Peter instead of sitting across from him again, "I'll need to stop by one of my towers while we're in the city. I have to talk to Pepper."

"I'll wait for you at a park or something." Peter smiled, "I can't believe this is actually happening. We're really going to have our own home."

"It's happening," Tony grinned broadly, "You don't have to wait for me, though, I don't mind you coming with me."

Peter cracked his knuckles mindlessly, and grabbed Tony's hand to fiddle with it, "I'm not going to intrude on your private conversations. And, uh... I kind of want to be alone for a little bit."

"If you're already sick of me, we probably shouldn't live together," Tony teased, but his eyes had always been expressive, and he couldn't hide his hurt.

"No, no, it's not that," Peter said quickly, "I just haven't been in the city in years, and I kind of want to take it all in by myself, you know?"

Tony nodded, giving him an understanding smile, "No problem, honey. You can take as long as you want, I won't go anywhere."

They left the next morning in one of Tony's more discreet cars. Peter had dug some snacks out of the kitchen cupboards and dumped them into the backseat, saying defensively that he had a faster metabolism when Tony watched him do so with an amused smile. They drove fast whenever Tony could get away with it, and Peter didn't do much to stop him, whooping loudly with his hand sticking out of the window.

They were forced to slow down when they neared the NYC traffic, blending in with all the other cars barely inching forward. Peter didn't complain about it, preoccupied with staring at his

surroundings with teary eyes. The tall buildings were comforting and familiar, even if he wasn't in his borough. The honking cars, the yellow taxis, the flickering billboards; seeing them felt like coming home.

Tony laid a hand on his knee, watching him with a gentle worry, "Everything okay?"

"Everything is amazing," Peter breathed, wiping at his watery eyes with shaking hands.

Tony didn't say anything else, smiling and turning back to face the road until they pulled up in front of the brownstone.

"This is it," Tony stepped out of the car, twisting his back to crack the bones and relieve himself of the pent up tension that spending several hours in a car had brought, "Are you ready to go in? The realtor's already inside and waiting for us."

Peter laced his fingers with Tony's, looking up at the tall building with a boldness he didn't completely feel, "I'm ready."

Chapter End Notes

Do you guys think Peter should apologize? Or was his anger justified?

Chapter 16

Tony dropped Peter off in Queens and drove away, glancing back even as he lost sight of him. The feeling of wrongness only increased as the distance between them grew larger, worry stirring his gut as earlier thoughts slunk back into his mind. The last time Peter had been alone on the streets of New York, he'd been kidnapped.

Tony assured himself that nothing like that would happen this time. Peter wasn't grieving and distracted -- though maybe he was, maybe all those feelings came rushing back, and he was grieving all over again. Grieving his aunt's death, grieving the years he'd lost as the world moved on without him, grieving for the innocence he'd still miraculously had after all the loss he'd endured, only for it to be stolen away.

Peter was different now. Tony hadn't known him until recently, but he could tell Peter used to be a different person. He still beamed brightly, still laughed loudly, still trusted him fully even after life had wronged him so badly. He was rougher around the edges, though, wary when most others wouldn't be. That was where the difference was clear.

He wished he'd had the forethought to give Peter a cellphone. At least that way, he could check on him sporadically throughout the day. Not too much, though. Peter did say he wanted space.

Tony got out of the car and entered his tower, waving off the slack jawed security guards that tried to stop him. He bypassed the lobby desk and got into a private elevator, scanning his ID card and moving up to Pepper's office.

"Is Ms. Potts busy?" Tony leaned onto the secretary's desk, watching her swiftly type on her desktop.

She didn't look up. "Do you have an appointment?"

"What's the world coming to when a man has to make an appointment to go into an office he owns?"

The secretary -- Stacy Maurice, if the ID card pinned to her chest was to be believed -- pursed her lips tightly at the comment, doubt and annoyance dancing on her face.

"Sir," Stacy looked up at him and froze, the reprimand cutting itself off as soon as her mind registered who she was looking at, "Mr. Stark!"

"That's my name," Tony hummed in agreement, "Don't wear it out."

Stacy took a subtle, deep breath, calming herself down and adjusting her blouse, tugging it down as she did in a much more conspicuous manner. "How may I help you?"

"I want to know if Ms. Potts is available for a quick chat," Tony droned, slightly annoyed that she hadn't been listening the first time he said so.

The woman leaned towards him, her dark blue blouse fluttering open slightly and exposing her breasts, "Is there anything else you need?"

Tony shook his head, "I'm fine."

"Are you sure, sir?" Stacy pressed, peering up at him coyly and sinking her teeth into her bottom

lip, “I’m more than willing to help you personally.”

“I can tell,” Tony deadpanned, “I’m not going to have to ask a third time about Pepper, am I?”

Stacy sighed, frustration flashing in her eyes as she turned back to her computer to check Pepper’s schedule. Tony forced down his amusement; he could tell exactly what she’d been trying to do. Maybe in the past, it would’ve worked. Now he just found it revolting.

“Ms. Potts is currently available, but I doubt she’d appreciate any visitors coming in with no warning.” Stacy said curtly.

“She loves me,” Tony turned on his heel and started walking down the hall that led to Pepper’s office.

He knocked on her door briefly and opened it before she could respond. She was hunched over her desk with a stack of contracts in front of her, a custom-made pen he’d gifted her years ago held tightly in hand. She looked up at the intrusion, mouth falling open in shock when she saw him.

Pepper scrambled up and around her desk, storming towards him and pulling him into a tight hug. Tony choked when the fierceness of her embrace cut off his air supply, only letting her do so for two seconds before he tapped out.

“Missed you too, Pep.” Tony said tightly, hunching over as oxygen started filtering through his lungs again.

“How many times are you going to do this?” Pepper asked wetly, brushing off the beginnings of tears from her eyes in an attempt to compose herself.

Tony looked up at her in mock offense. “It’s not like I asked to go missing.”

“With how often you *do* go missing, I wouldn’t be surprised if you do it to skip out on all the work you’re supposed to be doing for Stark Industries.” Pepper teased, her tired gaze leaving him momentarily to look at her mountain of papers.

Tony’s lips twitched upwards. “That’s actually what I’m here to talk to you about.”

“So, not to let me know that you’re alive?” She swatted him.

“That too,” Tony grimaced, rubbing his smarting arm, “I’m going to be taking a break from work. For the most part, anyway. You can send some things over, but don’t be over the top.”

“Why is that?” Pepper arched an eyebrow.

Tony grinned widely, and Pepper almost had to take a step away, taken aback by the pure happiness shining on his face. “I have someone I want you to meet.”

Pepper paused, “You’re not going to tell me who it is?”

“Well, maybe,” Tony hesitated, drumming his fingers along his pants as he thought, “It depends on whether he’s ready to meet you or not.”

“Oh, so it’s a he?” Pepper queried playfully.

Tony smiled. “He’s my boyfriend, and we’re moving into a brownstone in the city this weekend.”

“When did you get a boyfriend?” Pepper spluttered.

“I also left the Avengers,” Tony said casually.

“ *What ?* ” Pepper moved back to her chair, falling into it faintly, “Any other bombshells you want to throw at me?”

“We’ve also decided to have kids.” Tony lied, watching her reactions with entertained eyes.

Pepper stared at him. “There’s no way that’s true.”

“It’s not,” Tony confirmed, “but now you know why I’ll be working less. Peter wants to be involved in the moving process, so the moving team won’t be doing anything other than transporting our things. We’ll be pretty busy.”

“Peter?” Pepper repeated the name, turning it over in her head, “Well, there’s a clue.”

“You won’t find him,” Tony said smugly, “You can’t, since he’s legally dead.”

“Wow,” Pepper blinked, “This boyfriend of yours just keeps getting more interesting. I better get to meet him soon.”

“You will,” Tony promised. “Speaking of that boyfriend of mine, I should go get him. He wanted to walk around, but it’s getting dark, so I’ll be leaving now.”

“Bye, Tony,” Pepper pulled him into another hug, “I’m glad you’re back and safe.”

“Me too, Pep,” Tony breathed in her familiar scent, which solidified that he really was home, because Pepper had always had an elegant smell to her that he couldn’t find anywhere else.

He bid Pepper a goodbye and left her office, heading straight for the elevator without saying anything to Stacy. He went down to the lobby, out to the streets, and into his car.

His boyfriend was waiting for him.

Chapter 17

Peter was sitting on a bench when Tony pulled up to the park they'd agreed to meet at. He didn't look up when he heard Tony approach him, moving silently to make him some space on the bench and let him sit down.

Tony didn't let him brood for long. "How'd it go?"

"It was fine," Peter muttered, finally looking up from his shoes and turning to Tony.

"That's good," Tony fell silent. He wasn't sure how to go about this. Was this a situation he should be pushy in? Or was it better to give Peter some space?

"Let's go home," Peter latched onto Tony's hand and pulled him off of the bench, falling back a little to let Tony lead him to the car.

Tony unlocked the car and got in, watching Peter move around and sit next to him. He reached down and picked up a plastic white bag from the floor, then handed it to Peter, who stared at the bag in shock before slowly pushing it open.

A familiar sandwich stared back at him.

"You got me Delmar's?" Peter asked, voice hushed and suspiciously wobbly.

"Even better," Tony said smugly, "I got you your favorite."

Peter picked up his sandwich with shaking hands and tore it into precise halves. He held one out to Tony, who tried to gently push his hand away.

"It's for you, sweetheart," Tony declined, "I'm fine."

"I want you to try it," Peter said insistently, "Just one bite. If you don't like it, you don't have to eat it."

"That's not what my issue is," Tony shook his head, "I just want you to get to have the whole thing. Start making up for all the sandwiches you missed out on."

"Well, I want to share it with you," Peter said stubbornly, and placed the left half of the sandwich into Tony's hand.

Tony rolled his eyes and accepted the sandwich. He waited until Peter bit into his own half, watching his face go lax as nostalgia and sadness clouded his eyes. That wouldn't do, Tony decided.

"Mm," Tony said loudly, moaning into his own half, "So, so good, baby."

Peter glanced at him, setting his own sandwich in his lap to watch him eat instead.

Tony continued to groan exaggeratedly into his sandwich, "Never had anything this good in my life. Might just marry it, Pete."

Peter's lips twitched upwards into a smile, but it wasn't enough. Tony could still see the remnants of misery etched on his face. He needed to amp up the dramatics.

“Might even fuck it,” Tony told Peter, relishing the way his eyes widened in surprise and amusement, “Don’t know if I’d rather have you or the sandwich on my cock. You up for a threesome?”

Peter laughed then, loud and clear, and that was how Tony knew he’d succeeded in Operation: Make Peter Happy.

“Is that your secret kink? Sandwiches?” Peter asked, grinning brightly and bringing his sandwich to his mouth.

“Just this specific sandwich,” Tony informed him gravely, but he couldn’t keep up the pretense and joined Peter in his laughter.

“Are we going back to the compound?” Peter wondered, brushing off the crumbs on his hands once he finished eating.

“Actually,” Tony did the same and started driving out of the parking lot, “I was thinking we could stay at a hotel tonight. I don’t feel like driving in the dark today. Tomorrow, we’ll go to the compound and start packing our things.”

“And then we’ll drive back to the city in a few days with all our things,” Peter added.

“Yep,” Tony smiled, “I gotta say, I never thought I’d be getting a new place with my lover.”

“Didn’t you and Pepper live together?” Peter asked, confused.

“That was different,” Tony shook his head, “Pep was always moving into my houses. But for me to get an entirely new place with someone else... that’s new. It feels more permanent this way.”

“Is that a good thing?” Peter implored cautiously.

“I don’t know yet,” Tony answered honestly, “but I think it is.”

A few days later, they were leaving the compound with a couple of movers driving behind them, all of them headed to the brownstone in the city. Tony and Peter had their more personal belongings in the car with them, though Peter didn’t exactly own much. He did have a new cell phone, though, which was sitting in his pocket with only one contact in it. It was a bit depressing to see a single name on his contacts list, so he didn’t dwell on it much.

Tony had Dum-E, U, and Butterfingers temporarily dismantled to fit them into his backseat. He didn’t trust the movers with his bots.

They reached the brownstone in a few hours. The movers carried in all the boxes with Peter’s help, who wasn’t held back by Tony pointing out that doing so was what the movers were being paid for.

When the movers left, Tony and Peter were surrounded by many boxes and scattered furniture. They got to work at once. Tony went to put his bots together, giving them life once more and letting them explore their new home. While Tony did that, Peter busied himself with putting together some of the furniture.

They took a break from that to visit their bedroom and split off what belonged to who.

“I want the side of the bed closer to the door.” Peter said, throwing himself onto the bed.

“I want it too,” Tony crossed his arms, “If someone comes into our room, they’ll attack me first instead of you.”

“You really do have that superhero mindset,” Peter snorted, “I wanted that side so I could just fall into bed instead of having to go around.”

Tony ended up getting the side closest to the door. They sectioned off their walk-in closet next, though Peter warned Tony that it might be useless, because he would definitely go for Tony’s clothes instead of his own.

“I can buy you the same things I buy myself,” Tony offered.

Peter shook his head wildly, “The whole point is that the clothes are yours.”

Tony didn’t understand that much, but they moved on from the closet and went into the ensuite, which had two sinks. Tony took the left and Peter got the right; both were soon set up with their respective products.

“I think we got a pretty good start,” Tony said later, in bed with Peter, “We’ll probably be completely settled in, in the next couple of days.”

Peter sighed in exhaustion, “We still need to buy utensils for the kitchen. Pots, pans, and plates too. Some dish soap. The couches in the living room need pillows, we need to start setting up your lab, add FRIDAY to the building, put together the bookshelves, fill up the fridge --”

Tony clapped a hand over his mouth. “Okay, so we’re not even close to being done. Let’s not talk about it right now. I can feel my stress levels rising.”

“Sorry I said no to having the movers do everything,” Peter pulled his hand off, but kept it in his grasp, maintaining the contact between them.

“It’s fine,” Tony cuddled into his side, “You wanted the whole experience. And I like doing things myself, so I think I would’ve said no to the movers anyway.”

“As long as you’re happy,” Peter shrugged.

“With you, I have a feeling I’ll be happy for a long time,” Tony whispered, tracing his skin with fingertips hardened from years of work.

“Sap.”

“You love it.”

“I do.”

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Three months into life in their new home, someone rang the doorbell. Since Tony was in the shower, Peter threw on a bathrobe and went downstairs to open the front door. Unprompted, FRIDAY pulled up the camera footage from the front of the house, which revealed Steve Rogers looking around his and Tony's property.

Peter groaned and forced himself to keep walking. He reached the door and swung it open, trying not to laugh at the way Steve's face fell when he saw him.

"Is Tony in?" Steve tried to look over Peter's shoulder.

"He's showering right now," Peter said shortly.

"Right," Steve nodded, "Well, can I come in and wait for him? I need to talk to him."

Peter grimaced and opened the door further, letting him follow him inside. He led him to the kitchen, gesturing for him to sit on one of the barstools at the counter.

"Tea? Coffee?" Peter offered, "Tony will probably be a while. He loves his showers."

"Coffee," Steve perked up, "He's been showering? Sometimes he goes too long without one, since he's always in his lab."

"No offence, but it's none of your business if he's been showering," Peter said carefully, "That's kind of private. And it makes me feel like we're talking about a child. Feel free to ask him, though."

Steve nodded, trying not to look put off. They sipped at their coffees as they waited for Tony to come out, not doing much to fill in the awkward silence. Finally, after about fifteen minutes, Tony wandered into the kitchen with a towel tied around his hips, stuttering to a stop when he saw Steve.

"Honey, you didn't tell me you were having an affair," Tony joked, moving around Steve to stand next to Peter.

"I'm sorry you had to find out this way," Peter pressed a comforting kiss to his cheek, which was still damp and warm from his shower.

"Tony," Steve smiled, cutting into their banter, "I need to talk to you about something."

Tony held up a finger, making him wait for a few seconds as he stole Peter's mug and chugged the remaining coffee. Peter rolled his eyes but let him do so, taking back the now empty mug to fill it up again.

"Okay, let me guess," Tony sighed, returning his attention to Steve, "This is another attempt at ending my relationship."

Steve looked uncomfortable. "Can we have our conversation in private?"

"Anything you want to say to me can be said in front of my husband," Tony declined, only looking

slightly apologetic. He didn't want to talk about anything like this without Peter in the room.

"Husband?" Peter and Steve asked in unison, eyes wide.

Tony flushed and rushed to say, "I meant boyfriend."

Peter shook himself out of his surprise, going to soothe Tony like the nice *boyfriend* he was. "A little too soon, darling, but ask me again in a year."

Tony turned back to Steve, cheeks burning, "Alright, what do you want?"

"We've had to reconstruct our plans and tactics now that you're gone," Steve rubbed his forehead, "Just come back, Tony."

Tony pursed his lips. "What's so hard to understand about 'I have a life outside of the team, which I don't want to be in any longer'? I'll still be there for the end-of-the-world disasters. I'm not saying I want the world to end. I'm saying I have a company to run that I have to stop putting off on other people -- like Pepper, who hasn't gone on vacation since she started working as my CEO -- and a relationship I'm trying to build with Peter."

Steve's eyes darkened. "You never tried to leave until Peter came."

"I did try to stop being Iron Man, and it didn't work out. But this is different. I'm leaving the team, not the suit," Tony glared at him, then, "And don't talk about Peter in that tone."

"It's fine," Peter piped up, "I have a feeling you have a different issue with me, though."

Steve took a threatening step forward. "I know you're making Tony do these things. Tony would never abandon the team."

"It'd be in your best interest for you to step back, Rogers," Tony warned, "Don't even think about starting a fight in my home. I don't care that it's what you do best."

"Tony, it's okay," Steve assured him, "I'll make him stop doing this to you."

"You're fucking delusional," Tony groaned, protectively stepping in front of Peter, "You have three seconds to leave or I'm getting a restraining order."

Steve visibly hesitated. "I'll help you, Tony, don't worry."

When he walked himself out, Tony planted a kiss on Peter's neck and said, "FRIDAY, notify my lawyers about that restraining order, but keep things quiet. I don't need the press speculating."

"You're actually going to get one?" Peter asked, surprised, "He left."

"And he'll try to come back," Tony told him, "He's persistent and stubborn that way."

"Okay," Peter's eyebrows furrowed, "But how did he know our address?"

It turned out that Natasha had placed a tracker on Tony's car before they left the compound, which enraged Tony to the point that he drove back up to personally oversee his employees take back any Stark tech left in the building. He reamed her out in front of the rest of the Avengers, viciously enough that, five years later, Tony and Peter were living peacefully and without any interventions.

Tony was waiting for Peter to come home from his job interview at the moment. Peter had ended up attending Columbia University, and now had a bachelor's degree in chemistry, which would

surely come in handy in getting the position he'd applied for. Tony had no doubt that Peter would get the job; hence the meal he'd personally slaved over to congratulate his husband of two years.

He greeted Peter at the door with a kiss, ushering him inside and straight to the dining table, which was already set up with the cutlery and filled plates. He sat down after waiting for Peter to do the same, pouring champagne into their flutes.

"What's all this for?" Peter asked, bringing the flute to his lips and tilting it, allowing the liquid to seep into his mouth.

"To celebrate your new job, obviously," Tony scoffed, "Try the garlic bread, I made it myself."

"I didn't get the job," Peter said quickly, before Tony could say anything else.

Tony's mouth fell open. "What? I'll talk to them, baby, something's not right. Or you can come work at Stark Industries -- it's what I'd prefer, anyway. You wouldn't even have to apply; I'll take you straight to my labs. Which is pointless, since you already spend every day in there with me; you'll just be paid for it now."

"Imagine that," Peter mused, "Being paid to spend time with my husband."

"Doesn't it sound amazing?" Tony boasted, satisfied eyes glancing automatically at the ring adorning Peter's left hand, as they did each time the word 'husband' was mentioned in his vicinity.

"It sounds torturous," Peter corrected teasingly, "But anyway, I was just joking. I did get the job."

Tony dropped his fork with a loud clatter. "You know what? I'm not even mad. Congrats, sweetheart. I'm so proud of you."

Peter raised his flute of champagne. "Thank you. To new beginnings, I guess."

"To new beginnings," Tony agreed, clinking their flutes together.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so sorry it took me two weeks to get this update posted. On another note, we've reached the end! It's been real, guys. Thank you for all the support.

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